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DIGITIZING ETHNONATIONAL IDENTITIES: MULTIMEDIATIC REPRESENTATIONS OF PUERTO RICAN SOLDIERS

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DIGITIZING ETHNONATIONAL IDENTITIES: MULTIMEDIATIC REPRESENTATIONS OF PUERTO RICAN SOLDIERS

by

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Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2012

Dedication

Dedicated to the young Puerto Rican soldier, who went to France, never came, back but left a song to be remembered; who sailed to Korea, never came back, but left behind a letter to be remembered; who flew to Vietnam, never came back, but left a photo album to be remembered; the young dreamer deployed to Iraq, never came back, but left behind a digital diary to be remembered.

Acknowledgements

Finding so many people to thank is one of the most gratifying reflection moments while wrtiting a dissertation. Not only because this marks the end of a long process, but also because of the memories that come to mind. Being able to remember and name every person who contributed to my project made me realize that I was not alone during this tough journey. It also made me feel privileged by having help, guidance, expertise, advice, validation, humor, empathy, understanding, laughter, or simply a silence indicating solidarity at the touch of a button--via email or cellphone. To all friends, colleagues, and relatives who joined me in different ways and from different platforms during the process, thank you. They were an army of ideas during an intense, yet fun intellectual battle.

I would like to begin by thanking the faculty members of the Radio-TV-Film (RTF) Department at the University of Texas at Austin for trusting my intellectual potential and giving me the necessary tools for completing this project. I especially thank all faculty members for whom I worked as a Teaching Assistant: America Rodriguez, Lalitha Gopalan, Kathleen Tyner, and Charles Ramirez-Berg, for teaching me to respect and value the job of higher education. To the RTF staff, especially Charmarie Burke, Debbie Carney, Stephanie Crouch, Bert Herigstag, and Michael Monk, for lending a helping hand during the rigurous processes of graduate academic life. To my students, thanks for accepting the challenge and learn how to make visible the invisible.

To the Ford Foundation, thank you for your intellectual and financial support during critical stages of my research. Being part of the Ford family has strengthened my project from very needed interdisciplinary perspectives. To my mentor, Maggie Rivas Rodriguez, for giving me the opportunity to join her campaing Defend the Honor, and for

being part of your staff in Voices: Latino and Latina Oral History Project. This experience allowed me to understand the importance of intervening in history, and channel the voices of those who were silenced by hegemonic war narratives. To my intellectual parents and lifetime adivsors at the Communications School at University of Puerto Rico - Rio Piedras Campus, Silvia Alvarez-Curbelo, and Eliseo Colón-Zayas. Thank you for intellectually knighting me on my way to doctoral studies. But above all, I will always be in debt with your long distance intellectual and emotional support. To Doctor Richard Cherwitz, thanks for inviting me to join as a mentor in one of the most powerful and influential initatives at UT, the Intellectual Entrepreneurship. To Arizona State University, especially to The School of Letters and Sciences, thanks for believing in my potential and giving me the opportunity of becoming an Assistant Professor at your institution.

I have the honor of having a platoon of intelectuals on my dissertation committee; I am thankful for having them. To Jossiana Arroyo-Martínez, thank you for guiding me since my arrival at Austin. Our lunches tinged with conversation on Puerto Rican popular culture reified my vocation as a media scholar. To Madhavi Mallapragada, Ph.D., my confidence booster--her words of support in critical moments made me believe in my potential as a doctoral student without losing perspective on the importance of my development as an individual, who, besides being a scholar, is also a son, a brother, a partner, and a friend. To Jeniffer Fuller, thank you for making me feel as a part of academia. In particular, my most sincere thanks for recognizing my intellectual voice and channeling it at moments in which I would dare not talk. To Yeidy Rivero, Ph.D., thanks for accepting being one of my external readers. Thank you especially for producing so much necessary knowledge in Puerto Rico media studies, which became an inspiration for my scholarship. Finally, I would like to thank my advisor, Shanti Kumar, for taming

my anxiety during episodes of uncertainty, and for helping trace an escape route in moments of logical chaos. Always available for conversation, Doctor Kumar not only gave direction to my dissertation, but also to my professional carreer. It has been an honor working with you.

To my coallegues and research assistants in Puerto Rico, Fredy Oropeza and Luis Santiago, thank your for your help from afar. To the Audiovisual Media Archive at the School of Communications, University of Puerto Rico - Rio Piedras Campus, thank you for compiling such important material for Puerto Rican media history. To my outstanding editors, Alejandro Álvarez and Roger Gathman, thank you for revising, polishing, and commenting on my project. Every time you handed over your revisions and suggestions, you made me love my work even more.

To my long time friends, David Acosta, Chris Calzada, Edwin Dominguez, Erick Galloza, Sacha Ferreira, Arthur Martínez, Kelvin Rodriguez, and Enrique Rojas, for cheering me up and being a good distraction in moments of distress. Special thanks to those brilliant minds who, at some point, served as external readers of my work (for free), my supportive and always available friends, Raquel Garza and Jesse Rodolfo. A special mention to my witty and intellectual cohort, Courtney Brannon Donnoghue, Matt Payne, and Curran Nault. I will always treasure our memories from the seminar rooms at RTF. To Kevin Sanson and Kristen Warner, thanks for helping me build the funniest memories of graduate school. I had the privilege of having what I call a friend-colleague--Danny Mendez and Melba Hoffer, thanks for always pointing at the small light at the end of the tunnel. To Doctor Leonor M. Díaz, my emotional coach, thanks for your words of wisdom.

To Jorge D. Rodriguez, an angel who at the end of my stay in Austin gave me shelter and emotional support during one of the most challenging moments in my life. I

will be eternally grateful. To my housemate, colleague and sister, Barbara I. Abadia-Rexach: thank you for engaging in this adventure with me, hand in hand, like the borther and sister we will always be.

I would not like to close my acknowledgments without thanking my friend God, for daily reminding me of his existence through my wonderful and supportive family. To my parents, Jesús Avilés-Pérez and Doris Santiago-Villarubia, thank you for giving me light, for loving me and blessing me every single day. To my brothers, Alexy Avilés-Santiago and Jesús A. Avilés-Santiago, thank you for being my inspiration and emotional pillars from the moment I was born. You have been the best role models life has put in my way. To my sister Doris A. Avilés-Santiago, thanks for being the confidence of my soul and for bringing peace during so many emotional battles. Finally to those who during the last two decades have given me plenty of reasons to smile: my witty, fun, and lovely nephews.

And finally, to all Puerto Rican men and women who have served, serve now, and will keep serving in the Unites States Armed Forces. Thank you for sharing your oral and/or digital stories, and for rewriting a history that had ignored you for more than a century.

DIGITIZING ETHNONATIONAL IDENTITIES: MULTIMEDIATIC REPRESENTATIONS OF PUERTO RICAN SOLDIERS

Manuel Gerardo Avilés-Santiago, PhD.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2012

Supervisor: Shanti Kumar

The silence and invisibility of Puerto Rican soldiers in fictional and non-fictional representations of U.S. Wars has motivated me to look for alternative spaces in which these unaccounted voices and images are currently being produced, stored, circulated, and memorialized. Within this framework, my dissertation explores the self-representation of Puerto Rican servicemen and women in social networking sites (SNS), (i.e. as MySpace and Facebook), in user-generated content (UGC) platforms, (i.e. YouTube), and also in web memorials. I am interested in understanding how Puerto Rican soldiers self-represent their ethnonational identity online within the overlapping of second-class citizenship. The theoretical framework proposed for this research will apply theories such as 1) articulation; 2) the notion of contact zone; and 3) colonial/racial subjectivities. To complete this goal, my research method draws on online ethnography, textual, and critical discourse analysis. Firstly, I will discuss the limited repertoire of images of Puerto Rican soldiers in TV and film. My argument is that, besides the massive omission of this history, the images and motifs that do escape de facto social censorship will be in conversation with the self-representations. The second chapter is the result of four years of the process of online ethnography on which I analyze the instances of self-representation of Puerto Rican soldiers in SNS. My interest was seeing how those spaces were inflected by an ethnonational subjectivity. The third chapter explores the ways

Puerto Rican soldiers, embedded in mash-up cultures, uses UGCs platforms to upload videos that transform the soldiers from passive consumers of images to active producers of content, which tend to disrupt dominant narratives of power. The last chapter explores the emergence of web memorials dedicated to the Puerto Rican soldiers. My main argument is that these instances of self- representation in online spaces are in conversation with the moments of silences and misrepresentations of Puerto Rican soldiers in traditional media, but also have become acts of enunciation in which the particular Puerto Ricanness of the Puerto Rican soldier is affirmed within complex, layered histories of imperialism, racism, heterosexism, and second-class citizenship.

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Introduction

My interest in the military theme was not a coincidence. My father was a member of the Puerto Rico National Guard, an Army and Air National component of the United States National Guard. My Tio Abuelo fought in the 65th Infantry during the Korean[1] War. My uncle and my godfather served in Vietnam. Our home was located in the municipality of Aguada. Less than eight miles from the former Ramey Air Force Base, in the city of Aguadilla, I grew up listening to stories from the battlefield. In contrast, however, to this oral text of war, none of the most prominent media narratives of these wars chose to represent the Puerto Rican soldiers. At most, collateral mention was made of them. In David Halberstam's recent popular account of the Korean War, *The Coldest Winter* (2007), there is no entry for Puerto Ricans in the index of the 713 page book. In the Columbia Guide to the Vietnam War by David Anderson, which is designed as a "guide" for the general reader, there is no listing in the index for Puerto Rico or Puerto Ricans, although there is mention – however briefly – of African-Americans. Even so, Puerto Rico ranked 14th in injuries and 4th in combat deaths in Vietnam (Young & Buzzanco, 2008). This history and its erasure made Veterans Day weekend a bittersweet celebration in our household, as I saw those servicemen in my family trying to insert their individual experiences in collective acts of remembrance without success. Upon witnessing the somber gaze of my 'Tio Abuelo' as he tried to see himself in U.S. war-related books, documentaries or films, my heart broke. His interest in finding someone who could serve as his proxy in these narratives, coming from where he came from, serving as he served, never faded away. Perhaps someone who spoke Spanish, sang boleros while playing his guitar, and still carried a rosary for protection. Someone who

fought the war without knowing the reason behind it, perhaps because as he would always say, in his own words, "in life, one has to be grateful to those who put a piece of bread on the table".

In 2007, I found myself watching Ken Burn's documentary on WWII, *The War* (Burns & Novick, 2007). This film, sponsored by the National Endowment of the Arts[2] (NEA), consists of a fourteen-hour epic drama telling the story of WWII through the personal accounts of a few men and women from four American towns. Advance word about the show had spurred me and others to form *Defend the Honor* to protest against the original cut, which excluded Latino soldiers' experiences, and to advocate for their inclusion. As a result, after a highly debated editing process, the director agreed to hire a Latino producer to include barely twenty-eight minutes of visual addenda which contained interviews with two Mexican-American soldiers and one Native American who fought in the Pacific war theater. The inclusion was a result of active efforts by veteran organizations, civic leaders, scholars, and politicians who protested against the exclusion of Latina/o servicemen and servicewomen experiences. However, the added footage did not touch on the particular experiences of any single one of the more than 55,000 Puerto Ricans who served in WWII. It is not as if their stories, in an increasingly heterogeneous America, are not dramatically interesting, attesting to the complex experience of fighting for one's nation while being treated as a second-class citizen. This is what indeed occurred when these soldiers fought in the European and Pacific theaters in special segregated units. Why, then, are they not mentioned in the official historical accounts of the war? Where is the Puerto Rican soldier in most prominent media representations of U.S. wars?

Looking to see if the whiteout of the Puerto Rican participation in the American military extended down to our own time, Andrew Carroll's *Operation Homecoming*

(2008), a work resulting from a major initiative also launched by the NEA to gather eyewitness accounts, private journals, short stories, letters, and other personal writings of United States Troops involved in the Afghanistan or Iraq conflicts. I was, of course, trying to forward my own research interest in the representation of Puerto Rican soldiers in fiction and non-fiction narratives of war in traditional and recent forms of media. To my surprise and disappointment, Operation Homecoming, like its predecessors about WWII, Korea and Vietnam, lacked any concentration on Puerto Rican soldiers. It did not include a single personal account of any Puerto Rican soldier out of the more than three thousand who, at the time, had served in the "War on Terror" (WOT). Thus, any claims of the book being "the honest voices of war" or a "variety of voices" was everything but inclusive. This subjective piece of literature could not manage to find room for even one voice of the over 30,000 Puerto Ricans soldiers who served in Iraq and/or Afghanistan, or the National Guard members who have toured those zones.

The silence and invisibility of Puerto Rican soldiers in fictional and non-fictional representations of U.S. Wars, paired with own knowledge and experience of the contribution Puerto Rican soldiers have made in those wars fuels my efforts to seek alternative spaces in which these unaccounted voices and images currently are currently being produced, stored, circulated, and memorialized. Within this framework, my research explores the self-representation of Puerto Rican servicemen and women in social networking sites (SNS), (i.e. as MySpace and Facebook), in user-generated content (UGC) platforms, (i.e. YouTube), and also in web memorials. I am interested in understanding how Puerto Rican soldiers self-represent their racial and colonial subjectivity online within the overlapping discourses of second-class citizenship, gender and sexuality. I am locating these articulations within three main experiential frameworks: the soldiers' home/military base before deployment, the battlefield zone,

and the space of competing memories between home and deployment. These standpoints will complicate the articulation of the soldiers' identities due to factors in the collective background: the colonial relation with the U.S., the history of migration between the island and the mainland, and the colonial/racial subjectivity. One of the goals of this project is to understand how these ethnonational subjects articulate their identities in these digital environments.

The proceeding material outlines a segment of the history of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. Armed Forces, from their insertion in the military in 1917 to their participation in ethnic units in World War II. I will show how the hegemonic mainland perception of these soldiers, particularly in Korea, generated the creation of a theory of pathologies to explain their behavior (Gherovici, 2003a). I will then outline the history of their oppression and discrimination within the military, and (Alvarez-Curbelo, 2008) and conclude by surveying the sentiment of antimilitarism in Puerto Rico. This will provide a basis for understanding both the historical discursive positions of the Puerto Rican soldier and its possible transformations when they articulate their identity online. Next, I will move to a survey of literature on the articulation of Puerto Rican identity and the media, examining the discourse concerning the understandings of race and ethnicity in the online realm.

The initial section will focus on the configuration of the Puerto Rican identity in both local and U.S. media outlets. I am particularly influenced, here, by a triumvirate of cultural theorist: Frances Negrón-Muntaner (2004), Arlene Dávila (1998), and Yeidy M. Rivero (2005). The frameworks of these three theorists will have a major impact on the review of literature. The literature review will also bring into conversation transnational understandings of the Puerto Rican identity in U.S. media, connecting to insights offered by such scholars as Frances Aparicio (2004), Jorge Duany (2002), Lillian Jiménez

(1990), Richie Pérez (1990), Alberto Sandoval (1995 and 2007), and Miriam Jiménez-Román (2008). The arguments of these three scholars share the assumption that Puerto Rican identity was shaped within the colonial/racial dynamic that was always mediated by an ambiguous, problematic, and contested political status. This identity did not emerge in splendid insularity, but rather incorporated and adapted itself to the circular migration between the island and the mainland.

The second part of the literature review will focus on recent debates on how important are race and ethnicity issues as they shape online practice. I will summarize some of debates about race and ethnicity that have emerged in the last ten years, from the first cyber-generation utopianism of 'color-blindness' particularly prominent in the age of the textual-based, virtual arena, to more recent debates about racial politics that engage with the vastly more sophisticated visual interfaces of the current internet. This section will be greatly informed by the works of Lisa Nakamura (2002b, 2007) and Emily Noelle-Ignacio (2002).

The theoretical framework rests on a tripod, consisting of: 1) the theorization of articulation (Hall, Morley, & Chen, 1996); 2) the notion of contact zone (Bhabha, 2004; Pratt, 2008); and 3) colonial/racial subjectivities (Grosfoguel, 2005). The theory of articulation gives me a theory of symbolic interaction that allows me to contextualize self-representations of the Puerto Rican soldier within a structured power dynamic that produces relations of dominance, subservience and resistance. These self-representations, however, are unfolded within contact zones that explain and organize the relationship between the self-representations themselves and the position of the soldier within a war context. Analyzing the types of contact zones, I will emphasize two forms: a) trans-contact zone; and b) intra-contact zone. A trans-contact zone refers to the self-representations that occur in a non-war space (home, military bases, etc.), either before

deployment or after deployment (in the various commemorations, editings, forgettings of the politics of memory). Conversely, an intra-contact zone refers to the self-representations that are directly embedded in the battlefield.

Lastly, my research method will draw on a triangulation of processes, which include online ethnographies, textual, and critical discourse analysis (CDA) of SNSs (MySpace and Facebook), UGCs (YouTube and Vimeo), and several websites dedicated to the memory of Puerto Rican soldiers. The textual analysis aims to observe the visual, audio, and textual codes of such spaces. Next, I will observe the interplay between textual codes using the toolkit of discourse analysis, which allows me to unveil the articulation of identities. Finally, I will take into consideration the ethical implications of the online ethnography, which is too often overlooked by researchers. What are the ethical challenges of this kind of methodology? What ethical guidelines and/or consideration should be followed in this kind of research? Do the same ethical guidelines apply online as offline? Do we need new guidelines for online research? In the corresponding section, I will discuss some of the most the recent debates on Internet research ethics by means of a survey consisting of recent discussion on digital environment ethical guidelines and/or considerations.

CAUSALITIES OF WAR: PUERTO RICANS IN THE U.S. MILITARY

As I mentioned in the beginning, my interest in the contribution of the Puerto Rican military to the wars of this and the last century was, originally, a family affair: I grew up listening to oral stories of moments of glory and pain, in and after the unsung heroes experienced the battlefield. These were vivid images, but they were in curious disconnect from an almost total media silence. And when it wasn't silence, it was often

caricature. For example, the character of a funny, chubby, inept Puerto Rican soldier from the Vietnam War known as 'Soldado Manteca' (in English, The Fatty Soldier) was popular during the late 60s. Throughout the 80s and 90s, the roles of two funny and outrageous Vietnam veterans became popular in the characters of 'Herminio Dominguez' and 'El Veterano' (in English, The Veteran). More recently, when the media does become aware of the Puerto Rican soldier, it doesn't automatically transform him or her into caricature. Films like *Héroes de otra patria* [Heroes from Another Land] (Ortiz, 1998), *Irak vive en mí* [Iraq lives within me] (Ramos-Perea, 2008), and *El Lenguaje de la Guerra* [The Language of War] (Sued, 2009) capture the burdens of war in subjects who suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder.

As can be deduced from a quick reading of the few representation instances of Puerto Rican soldiers, it forcefully clashes with the 'white-male-warrior-hero' archetype, which dominates war narratives in the U.S. According to Privadera and Howard III (2006), the latter archetype is a masculinist, white social model in which the soldier is a rescuer and/or patriot figure common in U.S. folklore. For the media, the archetype measured the parameters of the acceptable: anyone who did not fit in this schema was 'othered' through various strategies: being made sinister, caricatured, or simply erased. In view of this powerful discursive machine, the search for representations of the Puerto Rican soldier proved to be, if not unsuccessful, at least disappointing. We learn about 'who saved Pvt. Ryan', but what about 'Pvt. Inocencio'? The main hero from the epic tales portrayed at my family gatherings seemed to be out of my reach, and was certainly not part of the popular stock of images proposed by visual media and national literature.

The participation of Puerto Rican in U.S. wars is directly owing to the American occupation and colonization of Puerto Rico at the end of the Spanish-American war. Puerto Ricans have participated in U.S. wars since they became citizens in 1917.

According to historian Silvia Álvarez-Curbelo (2008), the same year in which Puerto Ricans became U.S. citizens, they were called for military duty during World War I (WWI). To illustrate this segment of history, by 1918, out of the 236,853 Puerto Ricans registered as citizens, 17,855 had been drafted. The numbers were modest at the beginning, largely due to the obstacles thrown up by the prevailing system of racial segregation in the Army at the time (Gherovichi, 2003). Moreover, the fact that Puerto Ricans did not speak English[3] fluently and had trouble adjusting to the weather conditions on the European theater impeded the immediate deployment of drafted soldiers. Once the military presence in Puerto Rico began to consolidate, however, with the construction of bases and other military structures, the participation of Puerto Rican soldiers increased drastically.

Twenty-five years later, the American military took in many more Puerto Rican soldiers - 65,000 of them, all serving in combat in segregated units. For example, the 65th Infantry Regiment,[4] also known as "The Borinqueneers," was one of the segregated units of 6,000 Puerto Ricans who served with distinction during both WWII and the Korean War. Still later, nearly 48,000 Puerto Rican fought during the Vietnam War and suffered over 3,000 casualties. During Operation Desert Storm, approximately 2,600 Puerto Ricans served in combat. And finally, during the U.S.'s current WOT, Puerto Rico has contributed more troops in proportion to its population than any other state or territory but one—Nevada. Thus far, in general terms, the total presence of Puerto Rican soldiers in U.S. wars has been proportionally much higher than that of any of the fifty states.

In spite of the numerous and distinguished participation in multiple theaters of war spanning the twentieth century and into our own, the Puerto Rican soldier has been seen in the media as a mere second-class-citizen soldier, and has often been accorded that treatment by the military. According to Malavet (2004), a second-class citizen is defined

by a lesser number of legal rights. In the case of Puerto Ricans, statutory United States citizenship does not carry with it certain rights that belong to citizens of American states. But because of that statutory citizenship and U.S. racism, Puerto Ricans are positioned in the national imaginary as socially and politically second-class in relation to the dominant culture. In the imperial gaze, Puerto Ricans figure as lazy, stupid, instinctive, and incapable of comprehending simple orders. At the same time, Puerto Ricans have been mobilized in the numbers we referenced above. Their manpower was needed and used. Álvarez-Curbelo (2005) goes further and says:

> It was suggested that they could only be assigned to menial tasks since their fighting spirit and racial constitution was always called into question. The assessment was not a surprise. The island, a giant sugar plantation under American rule, was governed in tutorial fashion, and the colonial subjects were generally seen as children, of mixed breed and unfit for civic responsibilities.

Given these perceptions, the soldiers' behavior on the battlefield was always liable to be noted as pathological: the Puerto Rican syndrome. According to Patricia Gherovici (2003) 'the Puerto Rican syndrome' was coined during the 50s, when two reports were made about a strange symptoms among distressed Puerto Rican soldiers, mostly from the Korean War, one of which, a study by the Veterans Administration, remains unpublished, while the other report, "Psychopathologic Reaction Patterns in the Antilles Command," was published in the U. S. Armed Forces Medical Journal (Gherovici, 2003b). Among the reported symptoms were verbal hostility, destructive physical assault, wildly infantile behavior, catatonia, suicidal gestures, states of frenzy, lack of interest in physical appearance, partial loss of consciousness, seizures, and amnesia.

However, what Gherovici finds remarkable about the syndrome is the act of pathologizing difference. The 'Puerto Rican syndrome,' she explains, is "a mode of disease labeled as uniquely Puerto Rican, thus linking nationality, cultural phenomena,

and psychiatric disease" (p. 7). It was "culture specific…transmitted not by a virus but by a particular culture, which made it no less contagious" (p. 81). In fact, the Puerto Rican syndrome was not exclusive of traumatized Puerto Rican soldiers in the battlefield or of war veterans from the countryside of the island, but extends, as Gherovici points out, throughout the Puerto Rican diaspora: "The Puerto Rican syndrome is not limited to Puerto Ricans in their own territory, but has spread all over the continental United States" (p. 83). The so-called Hispanic ghettos in New York, Chicago, Hartford, or Philadelphia thus also produced similar manifestations. The situation brings into the open the fact that, to a certain hegemonic American gaze, the "deficiency" of Puerto Ricans was not simply a matter of the colonial relationship between the mainland and the island, but a matter of ethnicity that no escape from the island, either to a warzone or to the mainland, negates. On the other hand, as Gherovici does not dispute that some of the behaviors included in the syndrome were actually expressed by some Puerto Ricans, she believes that, within their understanding of their position, they were acting out a sort of political pathology that had landed them in such foreign climes, fighting for reasons that, at best, expressed the will of the mainland political elite to foster a global American dominance.

Álvarez-Curbelo argues that the socio-historical role of Puerto Ricans in the military is intrinsically related to the island's road to modernization, which involved violent spatial and psychological displacements. Nearly a quarter of a million of Puerto Ricans emigrated to the U.S. during the late 40s, forced by economic circumstances to search for a better future on the mainland. Similarly, the Puerto Rican soldiers were also viewed as symbols of the 'necessary sacrifice' when they left their homeland to battle in unknown lands. In the case of the Puerto Rican soldier, war becomes a rite of passage. According to Álvarez-Curbelo, war:

> …leads a soldier on a voyage to his inner self, but at the same time catapults an individual into a particular fellowship...the Puerto Rican band of brothers linked a notion of territoriality to cultural and ethnic identity. Patria (homeland, motherland) for a Puerto Rican soldier was without hesitation Puerto Rico. As a cultural and sentimental construct, patria was the amalgamation of real and imaginary landscapes, streams, hills and sunsets, of aromas, textures, and flavors that defined home; anthropologic places where life, meaning and remembrance were possible.

In this regard, the Puerto Rican soldier in the warzone becomes as much a diasporic subject as the Puerto Rican immigrant in New Jersey. The large difference is that war itself is a different and unsettling structure. The soldier must face death in the battlezone. Thus, what that death is for has a dramatic effect on his or her self-understanding. For the Puerto Rican soldier, war is viewed from three conflicting sets of subject positions built around their home, the battlefield, and those memories from the battlefield.

LUCHA SI, MARINA NO! ANTIMILITARISM SENTIMENT IN PUERTO RICO

The prejudices toward Puerto Ricans traverse the history of the twentieth and the young twenty first century. They are currently under public discussion, as the invidious and constant discrimination against Puerto Rican soldiers come to light. For example, Puerto Rican soldiers (and their families) who lived in the island do not receive the same health benefits: they are below par, compared to their fellow citizens, and not only those on the mainland, but also in other U.S. territories and military bases abroad. This contrasts with the island's evident contribution to the war effort: it currently ranks 15th among states and territories for total number of deployments in the "war on terror" by the Reserve and National Guard. In this regard, the history of Puerto Ricans in the military triggers not only public-discussion debates related to the colonial relationship with the US, but also serves as a stimulus to anti-militarism in the island. This sentiment was sparked on April 19, 1999, by the accidental death of a security guard, David Sanes-

Rodríguez, a civilian working during military practices at the municipal island of Vieques. A missile that accidentally dropped on his post killed him. Vieques has been the scene of some controversy before. During WWII, the U.S. military acquired about two thirds of Vieques, a municipality off the east coast of the island, as an extension to Roosevelt Roads Base already located on the east coast of the main island. The original purpose of the base (never implemented) was to provide a safe haven for the British fleet should Britain fall to Germany during WWII. But after the war, the U.S. Navy continued to use the island for military training, and as a testing ground for bombs, missiles, and other weapons.

Subsequent to the incident, in May 2000, Puerto Ricans demonstrated, calling for an end to live bombings and for the Navy's exit from the island. Their protest consisted in engaging civil disobedience by illegally entering into the practice grounds; some people even camped there. A few months later, small wooden structures were erected inside the practice grounds, and encampments which rose all over naval-restricted property in the island-municipality began to gain popularity. By that time, the protests had gained some international[5] recognition too, and people from all over the world joined the struggle. After four years of negotiations between the U.S. and Puerto Rico governments, the Navy left Vieques on May 1, 2003. This did not, however, calm the antimilitary sentiment, which is evidently latent in the island.

In 2007, a poll by newspaper El Nuevo Día showed that that 75 percent of islanders are against WOT. As the war on terrorism continues, the body count of fallen Puerto Rican soldiers grows. This situation has created an anti-recruiting campaign that began about the time of George Bush's reelection. Perhaps due to fatigue with the war, perhaps due to the organized anti-recruiting resistance, military enlistments in the island have dropped since then by 20 percent. As a consequence, the military was forced to

spend more on advertising and changing recruitment tactics to counter the activists' efforts. One of the emergent tactics was the use of new media technology for recruitment purposes, a well-thought tactic if we consider the growing presence of Puerto Rican soldiers online.

WIRING THE WAR ZONES: BORICUA SOLDIERS ONLINE

The invention of the Internet is genealogically related to research about communication tactics by the U.S. military. In 1962, the Department of Defense and the Advance Research Project Agency (DARPA) commissioned a study to create a decentralized, military-research network that could survive a nuclear attack. The history of the program is not relevant here: what is relevant is the relation of its child, the Internet, and its use as a tool by soldiers. The history of access to the Internet in military camps is fairly recent, and presents novel problems for a military organization that is, essentially, a command and control structure. It began with the creation of cyber cafés during the crisis in the Balkans in the 90s. Since then, military and private organizations have spent billions of dollars in 'wiring' war zones. For this generation of soldiers, the Internet has lessened the pain of long separations, helping them to stay in touch with their relatives daily. Nevertheless, the use of the Internet among soldiers goes beyond 'keeping in touch' with their families and friends.

Nowadays, nearly a thousand Puerto Ricans serving in the WOT have an active MySpace profile. Meanwhile, another twelve hundred serving in Iraq also have a profile in this SNS. Another large group have chosen to profile on Facebook, which follows privacy rules that makes it more difficult to quantify this group. In any case, the soldiers are using SNSs like millions of other end-users, whether to upload pictures, or write

comments on users' "walls," or simply letting family and friends know how they are or what they feel on the battlefield by updating their status, which involves, at a minimum, denoting mood and, more regularly, keeping a public journal of events, opinions, favorite songs, links, etc. By 2010, UGCs such as YouTube contained nearly a hundred uploaded videos by Puerto Rican soldiers. The content of the clips varies from salsa lessons in the military camps, or soldiers playing the cuatro in Afghanistan. Others, such as Juan 'Nuro' Cotto[6], have used both SNS and UGC platforms to distribute hip-hop music videos which he creates during his deployments.

To sum up, the Puerto Rican soldier not only has an online presence, s/he is also an active figure on the World Wide Web. The self-representation of ethno-national subjects online has not been subject to much research, as can be demonstrated after revising preliminary literature on the subject. For that reason, I began this dissertation with the idea of understanding how Puerto Rican soldiers articulate their ethnonational online. Even though my main focus is on the race/ethnicity spectrum, I will consider the way these other axis –such as class, gender, and sexuality- are uttered and combined in the articulation of identity.

PUERTO RICAN IDENTITY AND THE MEDIA

There is an immense literature on the representation of U.S. wars and soldiers in television and film, coming from a spectrum of critical positions. However, the existing literature is strikingly lacking in any exploration of the representation of Puerto Rican soldiers in either traditional or new forms of digital/social media. Perhaps this is due to the divide between those who deal with the sociology and literature of Puerto Rico and those who are interested in the Puerto Rican military subculture. Thus, while the critical

literature that deals with the dialectics of representation in fiction and non-fiction narratives of war (Kapushina, 2002), the analysis of mass-media coverage of the war and of the military (Cummings, 1992), and discussions about the construction of the white, male hero (Studlar & Desser, 1990) has developed frameworks and debates that attempt to interpret the American culture of war, these only rarely deal with the difference it makes when the protagonist is either brown or black. Only a few articles destabilize the idea of the white, male hero and bring into light discussions about race and ethnicity. For example, Studlar and Desser (1988) read the film First Blood (1982) in terms of their argument that it elides the question of color, even though half of Rambo's combat rifle company consisted of Blacks and Latinos. Dittmar and Michaud (1990) agree with this idea and state that even though the intersectionality of social class, race, gender, enlistment, and draft may get raised occasionally in war films, it quickly blends into the general history and politics of the war conflict.

For this reason, the texts that I found most helpful linked to the different components of my object of study: media-influenced Puerto Rican identities and discussions on online race and ethnicity. These may allow me to approximate certain patterns I find in the self-representation of Puerto Rican soldiers. The discussions will allow me to place the Puerto Rican subject within the representation dynamics of traditional media in order to understand, generally, the self-representation instances of social/digital media.

Television studies have explored the role of this visual medium as a site of struggle over the symbolic meanings of sex, class, race, and ethnicity in shaping national identity. Herman Gray (2004) argues that "television still remains a decisive arena in which struggles over representation, or more significantly, struggles over the meanings of representation continue to be waged at various levels of national politics, expressive

culture, and moral authority" (p. 17). These are some of the dimensions explored by Dávila (1998b) and Rivero (2005) in their work on television and Puerto Rican identity. Both authors examine the construction of the 'national' as it forms under the logic of "who belongs" and "who does not belong", with belonging to the nation articulated in terms of race/ethnicity through commercial television in Puerto Rico. Dávila and Rivero understand that Puerto Rico's locally produced television shows have created various sites that provoke and sometimes show discussion of social, cultural, and political issues. The discussion also establishes the boundaries of who belongs and who doesn't belong to the nation.

In the article "El Kiosko Budweiser: The Making of a 'National' Television Show in Puerto Rico" (1998a), Dávila looks into the way nationalist discourse is expressed in local productions. She argues that "locally produced commercial programming and product-oriented television have evolved into primary vehicles for the promotion of local artists and productions and for the imagining of Puerto Rico as a distinct national community" (p. 453). Dávila concluded that the show she examined " helps to display and reproduce some of the cultural hierarchies and conventions that sustain Puerto Rican cultural politics…[and] provides a space for social criticism…within the dominant parameters sustaining colonial Puerto Rican society" (p. 466), with that space being divided between actual air space and the hypothesized space in which the viewer receives and conceptualizes the message. She also acknowledges that the racist, sexist, and chauvinistic content of the show reify some of the socio-cultural hierarchies of the island.

Yeidy Rivero (2005) produced a comprehensive discussion about the issues of race and ethnicity in Puerto Rican media in her work, *Tuning Out Blackness: Race and Nation in the History of Puerto Rican Television*. She observed the ways in which blackness has been represented in Puerto Rico's commercial media, particularly

television. She analyzes the articulation of Puerto Rico's mestizaje and racial-democracy discourses as they transpose to television to demonstrate how representations of race on television contradict the racial egalitarianism embedded in the myth of la gran familia puertorriquena [the great Puerto Rican family]. She discuses the ways in which the first local situation comedy about a black, lower-class family, Mi Familia, was de-racialized by locating blackness outside the national imaginary, for instance by the association of blackness with the Dominican Republic and Nuyoricans, who are generally perceived as the other. According to Rivero, the otherness of Nuyoricans is mediated by their portrayal to Puerto Ricans on the island not only in Puerto Rican media, but by American media in general, thereby creating, on the one hand, an alienation between Puerto Rican island identity and Nuyorican identity, and on the other hand, an ongoing discourse regarding issues of cultural authenticity, language, and moral values. Several of Puerto Rico's television narratives reproduced certain stereotypes of Nuyoricans at large in the mainland. Thus, though it is true that some of the stereotypical representations of Nuyoricans are island-based, what is interesting is how these island based representations respond to and are encoded by a repertoire of images and associations that has been produced and circulated for decades in the U.S. popular imaginary.

According to Pérez (1997), the representation and presence of Puerto Ricans by the mass media takes three main forms: exclusion, dehumanization, and job discrimination. Mass media refuses to acknowledge Puerto Ricans. This is evident if we consider the current situation of U.S. prime-time television. Besides the already cancelled sitcoms of Luis (Shriner, 2003) and Freddie (Pasquin, 2005), commercial television marginalizes Puerto Ricans to the point of invisibility. To complicate the scenario, when they appear, they are target of stereotyping. But the criminalization of Puerto Ricans is not exclusive of contemporary television products. In fact, these patterns started in films

more than sixty years ago, when the mass migration of Puerto Ricans to the U.S. began. There are more than a dozen Hollywood films–made between 1949 and 1980–that configured the Puerto Rican identity as violent, mentally inferior, lazy, and sometimes hyper-sexualized. Movies like *City Across the River* (1949), *Blackboard Jungle* (1955), *The Young Savages* (1961), and *The Possession of Joel Delaney* (1972) help in the articulation of Puerto Rican otherness. Yet, the film *West Side Story* (1951) became the turning point in making Puerto Ricans a distinct racialized minority (Grosfoguel, 2005). Negrón-Muntaner (2004) states that *West Side Story* is the earliest, widely disseminated, U.S. mass culture product to construe Puerto Ricans as a specific, and hence different, ethnic group, ranked in a particular social order, living in a distinct location, yet informed by uniquely American racialization process. In general terms, *West Side Story* does not exclude Puerto Ricans from America, but includes them in very specific ways: non-white, criminally stylish, and queerly masculine. According to Sandoval-Sánchez (1997) "once they [Puerto Ricans] are interpellated by the prefabricated Hollywood image –Made in the U.S.A.- of their ethnicity, they identify with the imperial object/image projected in the screen" (p. 177).

A techno-optimistic scenario that counters the complex history of media stereotypes and exclusion proposes that emerging, digital/social media technologies, with their capacity for being stored, manipulated and circulated relatively cheaply and on a mass scale will create spaces for contesting and/or intervening systems of representation. Yet, when taking into account this scenario from a Puerto Rican perspective, I realized that Puerto Rico scarcely figure into the ideas of the digital/social media discussion. For instance, Dara E. Goldman's "Virtual Islands" (Goldman, 2008), did an early study of virtual communities in Puerto Rico. Kevin S. Carroll's explored the use of language in SNS environments. His article "Puerto Rican Language Use on MySpace" (K. Carroll,

2008) explores the use of English and Spanish in the articulation of a Puerto Rican identity. Miriam Jiménez-Román's article (2008), "Boricuas vs. Nuyoricans: Indeed!" article looked at uses of verbal and visual claims online to explain the alleged differences between Puerto Ricans in the island and those in the mainland. Jimenez-Román focuses on a two-minute video available in YouTube title 'Boricuas: The Truth.' The video, created by an individual named "SagitarioFino," informs the viewers that Puerto Ricans from the island are overwhelmingly "blancos" (white) or mestizos of Taíno and European ancestry. In contrast, the video claims that Nuyoricans are third or fourth-generation Puerto Ricans who are usually mixed with African Americans, cannot speak Spanish properly, act trashy, and are uneducated and violent. Beyond the reference to this one video (which it is difficult to claim as representative of any broader opinion, even as it may bring together floating beliefs in the Puerto Rican space), the article focuses mostly on the racialization of Nuyoricans and the relationships between Latinos and Afro-Latinos.

Even though the literature on Puerto Rican identity formation online is small, there is a much larger literature about issues of race and ethnicity online that came into existence conterminously with the advent of the Internet as a popular phenomenon since the mid 90s. In the following section, I will explore some of these debates and how they can be used to understand aspects of Puerto Rican ethnonational identity.

DISCUSSIONS ABOUT RACE/ETHNICITY ONLINE

I was part of the generation that grew up during the 'Internet boom' of the 90s. As a teenager, I was fascinated by utopian rhetoric used in advertising for promoting the Internet. For example, Microsoft promised the ability to travel anywhere with their

browser, the Internet Explorer. The promise was quite alluring; especially for a young, working-class Puerto Rican. However, in order to afford services such as America Online (AOL) or even Puerto Rico's local branch, Caribbean Internet and Coqui Net, I had to make money, which I did by working at a Car Wash and at a restaurant. Some of my paycheck went into their expensive fees for services. The only free network access close to me was that made available at the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez Campus. The trip to campus would take one hour on public transportation. Yet, in front of the screen, it would only take me a few minutes to access a "universe of information and opportunities." I am aware that this last statement is a cliché, but it describes exactly my feeling as an adolescent about the Internet. It truly seemed a utopian technology. I do not intend to discuss in detail the utopian/dystopian discourses surrounding the Internet. However, it is important to mention this initial utopian promise if only in order to understand the post-utopian backlash that has cast a much more suspicious eye on the Internet and that often shapes discussions on issues of class, gender, race, and ethnicity on the Internet, without acknowledging the experiences of teenagers in the 90s such as me. In what follows, I will summarize some of the major motifs in recent discussions about race and ethnicity that are relevant to my topic: in particular, the discussion of the rhetoric of 'color-blindness' in an early textual-based virtual arena and the more recent debates about racial politics that have arisen in tandem with the current dominance of more visual interfaces.

Early studies on the Internet were concerned with the ways in which new cyber technologies affected traditional social environments, such as communities and the self (Jones, 1995; Turkle, 1994). Such studies often focused on the development of new identities or the mutation and/or erasure of traditional identities. Some scholars expressed the concern that cultural identities would be homogenized as they assimilated to the

Anglo-centric nature of the Web as it was set up at that time. Other authors focused on gender identities and explored the links between postmodern subjectivities and the Internet. National cultures, race, and/or ethnicity were less of a concern – figuring at best as the archaic remnant that would be swept away by the globalizing power of the Net.

However, the formal discussions about these topics soon intruded on the scene, marked by Bosah Ebo's book, *Cyberghetto or Cybertopia? Race, Class and Gender on the Internet* (1998). This edited volume, divided in three parts, took seriously the issue of race and its articulation on the Internet. Still, at this point the worry had less to do with the cultural semiotics of the Internet moment, and more to do with the access - mostly focusing on marginalization and digital divide. In sharp contrast, *Race in Cyberspace* (Kolko, Nakamura, & Rodman, 2000) was one of the first anthologies that took a deeper view of the Internet effect on race and ethnicity, wrestling with how the Internet creates its own racially marked categories, but also continued to reflect racial hierarchies and power struggles. The authors in this volume took as their point of departure a vision of the Internet as a "perpendicular world" (the phrase coined by Melinda L. De Jesús), with participants creating a new community in this transnational location, while drawing upon lessons learned in their offline communities. An approach of this kind encourages scholars to look into what happens to racial and ethnic categories when online discussions intersect with the ones built on political issues specific to a certain location and history.

This approach is also evident in the work of Noelle-Ignacio (2005), *Building Diaspora: Filipino Cultural Community Formation on the Internet*. In her book, Ignacio uses De Jesús's model of the 'Internet as a perpendicular world' to analysis the way Filipino diasporic newsgroups locate their users' sense of self. She situates her analysis in the context of the U.S. post-9/11; a moment in history in which the question of who is

American, the impact of racism, and the identity issues pertaining people of color crystallized on the very surface of the American collective consciousness. Hence, she looks into the articulation, re-articulation, and influence of local and global discourses on Filipino identity in newsgroup, listservs, and website postings. This kind of research belonged to the era that still modeled the Internet in terms of text-based sites and uses, which made it easy to use the tools of discourse analysis as the primary sociological methodology. Of course, a discourse analysis of text-driven interfaces tends to omit considerations of the visual field. The prompted question is how a more visually charged interface has altered the racial politics of the Internet?

In the book titled *Cybertypes: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity on the Internet* (2002a), Lisa Nakamura explores how race occurs in a middle-ground between a textual-based and visually charged Internet. Her work covers many angles, including the role of online avatars, the images of corporate advertising, the function of email jokes, and representations of cyberspace in science fiction. The book deals primarily with the ways in which Internet discourses shape how race online gains its meanings. She pointed out that commerce had driven the history of the Internet, and not a utopic vision of the global village in which all end-users are equal. Rather, the elimination of identity categories only served as a means to sell the appearance of a progressive space. The rhetoric of cybernetic advertising expressed that the possibility of such utopic communities relies on eradicating difference, and replacing it with exotic gestures constructed around the tourist's gaze. Nakamura correctly points out that the promise of Internet advertising is a kind of conformity which requires giving up the complexity of our unique identities. As she notes, "[t]he spectacles of race in these advertising images are designed to stabilize contemporary anxieties that networking technology and access to cyberspace may break down ethnic and racial differences. These advertisements promote the glories of

cyberspace cast the viewer in the position of the tourist, and sketch out a future in which difference is either elided or put in its proper place" (p. 87). Yet, her biggest contribution is the neologism of 'cybertype'. Nakamura uses this term to "describe the distinctive ways that the Internet propagates, disseminates, and commodifies images of race and racism" (p. 3). Throughout the book she acknowledges that the Internet is a powerful image-reproduction machine (cybertyping).

Her interest in the Internet as an image-reproduction machine led her to her most recent work, *Digitizing Race* (Nakamura, 2007). In this work, she states that, in contrast to the homogenizing claims of techno-utopianism, the Internet has become an active space for visual signification where differences between race, gender, and nationality are intensified, modulated, reiterated, and challenged by its participants. Nakamura also sees the Internet as perpendicular space. In fact, she also locates a visually driven Internet in "a premillennial neoliberal moment, when race was disappeared from public and governmental discourse while at the same time policies regarding Internet infrastructure and access were being formed" (p. 202). This contextualization is paralleled with her critique of the idea that the Internet is a color blind space:

The Internet is certainly an infrastructure and a medium that seemed to many to be race free or color blind but is in fact imbued with racial politics as a result of the digital inequalities evident in its demographics, its political economy and its content…. an increasingly active purveyor of images of race as well as narratives about them. (Nakamura, 2007, p. 76). The imposition of color-blindness on the Internet and the elimination of any ethnic and/or racial categories are the ruses of white skin privilege. Nakamura (2006) expands on this by saying that "the figuration of cyberculture as 'white by default' tends to demonize people of color as unsophisticated, uneducated and stuck in a pre-technological past" (p. 86).

Guillermo Gómez-Peña (2000) added to the early discussion of Internet culture by hypothesizing that Latinos are caught between a preindustrial past and an imposed modernity. Hence, their relation with the Internet is structurally that of an outsider. In fact, he urges to 'brownify' the virtual space, to 'Spanglishize the Net' and to 'infect' the linguas francas" (p. 307). But the question is whether it is possible is to carry out Gómez-Peña's proposal. On this matter, Nakamura (2007) acknowledges that one of the most important developments in terms of Internet users between 2000 and 2005 is the increase in the number of ethnic and racial minorities online. However, she urges scholars to "ask questions regarding people of color as producers of Internet content, not just consumers" (p. 200). In addition, Nakamura points out the importance of incorporating racial minorities into the decision-making process itself, allowing minorities a greater access to Internet choices, both on the Web and in the codes that run the software. Furthermore, "The burden and privilege of creating racial and ethnic community in cyberspace must be taken up by critics, artists, users, and designers of color before the master's tools can be used to dismantle the masters house" (Nakamura, 2002, p. 135).

This survey stresses the seminal contributions of scholars like Nakamura, Noelle-Ignacio, Gómez-Peña, among others, in turning Internet studies back to questions of ethnicity and race. Their work, however, still leaves many dimensions unexplored. This is to an extent inevitable, as the critical commentary lags the technical changes that are ongoing on the net. For instance, social networking has expanded its presence and changed its features considerably since 2000. In addition, there is a striking lack of scholarly work on U.S.-Latino uses of new media. Besides Carleen Sanchez (Sanchez, 2010) article, "Chicana on Second Life", there is a distinct lack of research in this area. In fact, the Latin American context as a whole is under-researched at least among

academic works in the American and Anglosphere. Latin American intellectuals themselves have been slow to abandon a unilateral class model of social interaction, which is simply extended to the Internet by means of the category of the digital divide, ignoring the racial/ethnic spectrum. This is in part because in Latin America the discourse of mestizaje, or racial mixing, became a key factor in the construction of a racially integrated society, because everyone, regardless of skin color, is racially mixed and, thus, an 'equal' member within the nation.

Back on the days of textual-based Internet, the requisite question in a chat room was ASL (Age-Sex-Location)? Since these chat rooms were mostly a text-only phenomenon, age, gender, race and/or ethnicity was not evident unless the person chose to display them in their avatar description. Therefore, the very moment I responded to the ASL query, the fluidity of my online identity was frozen for the first time, not necessarily by disclosing my age and/or gender, but mostly by showing the geographical space which I occupied. Being located in Puerto Rico not only meant that I was physically placed in the Caribbean or that I was a dial-up user rather than broadband one—it also meant that I was racially and ethnically 'the other'. It would have been easier to do a cross-racial passing, although in the end, race and ethnicity would have revealed themselves in my lack of English proficiency. So what are the configurations of Puerto Rican 'Otherness' 'offline' which translate so easily into the 'online'?

Studying the discursive formations of race and ethnicity in Puerto Rico crucially requires acknowledging that Puerto Rican identity must be understood as a translocal entity strongly influenced by the racial politics of the U.S. mainland, yet also generated endogenously in the island. Yeidy Rivero (2005) understands that race in Puerto Rico responds to a social construction influenced by Western colonial and racial ideologies. To illustrate this influence, in the 2000 U.S. Census, only 10.8 percent of the island's

population defined themselves as black, while 84 percent categorized themselves as white. Partly this is due to the colonial relationship between U.S. and Puerto Rico, with the American racist logic of the black-white binary imposing considerable costs on any Puerto Rican who wanted to identify as black. In the island, the racial categorizations are most clearly associated with physical appearance. Being Puerto Rican meant that any person could fall within a range of racial classifications, including *negro, moreno, prieto, trigueño, indio, jabao, blanco*, among others. The racial categories involve a complex inventory of physical traits such as skin pigmentation, hair texture, nose shape, and lip form. But this vocabulary has never translated well from the Puerto Rican to the U.S. context, which, in the years of Jim Crow that spanned the period after the Civil War all the way up to the 1950s, encouraged an easier to administer Manichean racial vocabulary. The U.S. binary racial model has never captured the varieties of Puerto Rican ordinary language racial talk.

It is significant to mention that being Puerto Rican is a sign of ethnicity as well as nationhood. According to Frances Negrón-Muntaner (2004), Puerto Ricans are considered an ethno-nation that "hailed and imagined themselves as "people," understood alternately as an "ethnicity" (defined by a specific culture across national-state boundaries) and a "nationality" (defined in relationship to a specific territory, with full or partial claims to independent sovereignty) (p. 6). The ethno-nation discourse is a key factor in the construction of Puerto Rico's hegemonic mestiza identity, which is in turn represented by a forced analogy to the family: *la gran familia puertorriquena* (the great Puerto Rican family). But how do those complex discourses of race and ethnicity translate to the online realm? What does it mean to be Puerto Rican on the Internet? Is it possible to escape from Otherness in such a hyper-visual space? My observation of the articulation of Puerto Rican identity online is that racial hierarchies remain practically

intact. In the next section, I will explore the ways in which some of the theoretical insights from diaspora scholarships help in thinking about race in cyberspace.

RE-THINKING DIASPORAS ONLINE

The proliferation of new media technologies, particularly the Internet, have created real time connectivity that enabled diasporic communities to articulate new ways of imaging an idea of home – and at the same time feeding back to those 'traditional' locales. David Morley (Morley, 2000) expands on this by saying that the ideas of home have transcended geometrical space. He goes further when he considers:

> Home is not always symbolized by any physical container. At times language and culture themselves provide the migrant with the ultimate mobile home…Thus home may not be so much a singular physical entity fixed in a particular place, but rather a mobile, symbolic habitat, a performative way of life and of doing things in which one make one's home while in movement. (p. 47).

Durham (1999) problematizes this approach by considering the mobility of identities and saying that they "have no literal ground, no singular site of origin; though they have real power, and real referentiality, they are born metaphorical" (p. 36). The sense of power and agency could be examined in the way diasporic communities make use of ideal images of their homeland to redeem themselves in the new place. This performative stance was considerably "amped" by the easy access the Internet gives to home, both textually and visually. In this way, it serves as a useful tool for diasporic groups wishing to reinforce social networking and national identities. In fact, several contemporary researches hypothesize that Internet is beginning to play a role in helping immigrants to manage the tensions produced by movement and the loss of the sense of familiarity and security related to their place of origin.

On her study about the relationship of the Indian diaspora to the web, Mallapragada (2006) critically explores the intersection of the virtual and the diasporic and the ways such intertwining articulates interesting narratives about the politics of home, homeland, and homepage. The intersection also provides a space in which struggles over issues of identity and belonging are influenced by instances of migration, mobility, dislocation, and relocation. Similarly, in her book Building Diaspora, Noelle-Ignacio (2005) reveals that the impacts of transnational networks among diasporic groups have created multiple contested identities. As the nation can be considered, on one level, a collective of identities, the question arises as to what changes, if any, will be inaugurated by imagining the nation from the standpoint of those new and fissuring identities. Since this literature prioritizes a civilian population, I am interested in the transformations undergone by a colonial military force in the battlezone. Yet, as I am at pains to point out above, from my own experience and the history of Puerto Rican involvement in U.S. wars, the military is an ignored but massive factor in the shaping of Puerto Rican attitudes. Thus, I will not conduct my inquiry by assuming a monolithic model of self-identity shared by all Puerto Rican military personnel, I will assume, however, that the military persona, however inhabited, has a footing in the ways the community imagines itself, operating among and entering into the different constructions of racial/ethnic and national identities.

I start my analysis from the assumption that Puerto Rico has indeed all the properties of a nation, save for the fact that it is not a sovereign state. While the state is an important outgrowth of the nation, it is not identical to it: France as a monarchy, an empire and a republic (all changes of state-form) remained France. In this sense, Puerto Rico possesses the collective consciousness of a shared history, language, and culture which Benedict Anderson recalls in his seminal work Imagined Communities (1991). The

island also possesses many of the symbolic attributes of a nation, such as a national system of universities, museums, cultural institutions, and even national representations in international sports and beauty pageants. In fact, according to Duany (2002), the vast majority of Puerto Ricans imagine themselves as distinct from Americans as well as from other Latin American and Caribbean people. Therefore, from my perspective, it is possible—and necessary—to talk about a Puerto Rican diaspora.

To conclude, exploring race and ethnicity online beyond the U.S.-based racial frameworks is a necessary prelude to understanding the Puerto Rican presence online, and subsets of it – for instance, Puerto Rican soldiers. The existing literature on race and ethnicity online is still governed by the in-place binary oppositions that have long determined the European and American understanding of the European/Other encounter, such as White vs. Asian-Americans or White vs. Latino. To break this binary apart and operate under the guidance of other categories of analysis, I turn to Kimberle Creenshaw's (1995) intersectionality approach, which fills several gaps in the existing literature about new media and race/ethnicity, even though it was articulated before the Internet became the force that it is today. She argues that gender, race, and class intersect to create the particular context on which we understand identity politics. Therefore, an intersectional approach would avoid the one-dimensional kind of analysis to offer a multidimensional understanding of identities. This is peculiarly apposite for online interactions, which take place, potentially, outside of any face-to-face space. Given the existence of the dense Puerto Rican vocabulary of racial and ethnic types, the intersectional approach has the advantage of complicating the notion of ethnonational without excessively blurring all category lines.

ARTICULATING ETHNONATIONAL IDENTITIES IN THE CONTACT ZONE

Given the intersectional approach, which views identity formation in terms of strategies instead of essences, the next step is to understand the exterior factors that help determine those identities. The theoretical framework which I propose for this dissertation will rely on a tripod, consisting of—a) the notion of articulation (Hall, et al., 1996); b) the notion of contact zone (Bhabha, 2004; Pratt, 2008) and c) the notion of colonial/racial subjectivities (Grosfoguel, 2005). Hall's theory of articulation will help me contextualize the contests and contradictions by which self-representation expresses itself as a process, in this case the process by which Puerto Ricans represent themselves within the structure and play of power which are implied in relations of dominance and resistance. The second leg of my theoretical approach locates these self-representations in contact zones – in this case, zones that are not those of habitation or the civilian habitus, but those which emerge when the soldier enters the war context. Finally, the way these zones of contact are lived is understood through the colonial/racial subjectivities at play in multiple institutional and non-institutional structures (the Military, other peoples with whom the soldier comes into contact, Internet communities, etc.)

As I stated earlier, the massive neglect of the history of Puerto Ricans in the military is the result of a contentious and complex mechanism of subordination, silencing and resistance. For this reason, I will employ Stuart Hall's articulation theory to understand the linkage between the discourses of colonialism and militarism, and the social forces and historical circumstances that connected them. According to the Hall:

> The unity formed by this combination or articulation [is] a complex structure in which things are related, as much through their differences as through their similarities. […] It also means –since the combination is a structure (an articulated combination) and not a random association – that there will be

> structured relation between its parts, i.e., relations of dominance and subordination (Hall, 1980, 325).

This approach will lead me to examine how competing ideologies such as colonialism and anti-imperialism, or militarism and antimilitarism, are invoked, mobilized, combined, altered, rejected, or ignored in these digital environments.

The above-mentioned ideologies do not emerge arbitrarily; they are part of dynamics that emerge and impinge on contact zones. Mary Louise Pratt (2008) defines a contact zone as "the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict" (p. 6). She uses the term to: 1) explain the intersection of spatially and historically disjointed subjects; 2) to foreground the interactive, improvisational dimensions of colonial encounters; 3) to emphasize on how subjects are constituted in and by their relationships to each other; and to 4) treat relationships among colonizers and colonized not in terms of the binaries engendered by separateness or apartheid, but in terms of interaction. Grosfoguel (2005) uses Pratt's notion of contact zone to understand the particular situation of Puerto Ricans in New York. "Since racialization is not merely about skin color," Grosfoguel claims, "Puerto Ricans of all colors were increasingly perceived by Euro-Americans as a racialized "Other"" (p. 164). He succinctly explains that:

> …no matter how blond and blue eyed a person may be, or whether she or he can "pass"; the moment that person identifies her or himself as Puerto Rican, she or he entered the labyrinth of social Otherness…marked by racist stereotypes such as laziness, violence, criminal behavior, stupidity, and dirtiness. Although Puerto Ricans form a phenotypically variable group, they have become a new race… (p. 165).

Secondly, he adds that Puerto Ricans (and African-Americans) "cannot exercise their full rights because of the history of racial/colonial oppression" (p. 162). He points out that "although the formal colonial barriers to social mobility have disappeared…Puerto Ricans still encounter the old racial/colonial stereotypes as barriers to equality and social mobility" (p. 162).

Taking my lead from Grosfuguel's research in the offline political geography of the Puerto Rican diaspora, I would suggest that the determinants of the labyrinth of social otherness are still going to exercise an enormous cultural power in the self-representations of Puerto Rican soldiers online. These soldiers are entering an online contact zone from a battlefield contact zone, which in turn derives from a series of colonialist/ethnic contact zones, a compound which traverses not only through space and time, but also operates within fashions of memory. To simplify this, I will propose two forms of contact zone: a) trans-contact zone; and b) intra-contact zone. A trans-contact zone refers to those self-representations that occur in a non-war space (home, military bases, etc.), either pre-deployment or post-deployment (within the fashions of the politics of memory). Conversely, an intra-contact zone refers to the self-representations that are directly embedded in the battlefield zone. For instance, the encounter between Puerto Rican soldiers (colonized) and other white soldiers and/or officials (the colonizers) accentuates their paradoxical socio-political situation, which is made more complicated by their encounter with a variety of "native" Others – Iraqis, Afghanis and other peoples who may or may not be allies. In this regard, Puerto Ricans soldiers—especially those who live on the island and who probably never voted in any presidential election in Puerto Rico, who may not be fluent in English (or may not speak English at all), and who do not enjoy the rights of full citizenship or the derivative benefits that accrue from

employment by the Defense Department—have had to rally in the defense of the U.S. in each of its wars.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research method I employed involved intertwining an offline and an online environment, each of which was traversed by multiple forms of media. Therefore, aspects such as the rapid changes of Internet technologies, circularity of soldiers' deployment, the general atmosphere of uncertainty within a war context, and the often unverifiable identity traits in the online realm were variables[7] that no doubt affected the performance of this research. For example, when I started my preliminary observation of Puerto Rican soldier's profiles four years ago, MySpace was the most popular SNS among them as a social group. In fact, in February 2006, the Marine Corps launched its own MySpace profile as a recruiting strategy[8]. The rapid rise of Facebook was not on the horizon at that time.

Preliminary studies in SNS have suggested that the racial distribution of profile owners is comparable to that of the U.S. population, with some suggestions of higher minority representations in social networking websites (boyd, 2007; (Moreno & Christakis, 2008). In terms of class, boyd (2007b) suggests that there is a sharp divide between MySpace and Facebook cultures. While MySpace is mostly working class, Facebook is upper-middle-class and college-bound. This divide will play an important role in the military population, since Puerto Ricans who enroll in the military generally come from a working-class background and enlist in the service as a means of earning funding for higher education, among other benefits. However, over those four years Facebook gained popularity in ways that have forced other SNSs into what people called

"Facebookisation." The term refers to the process of incorporating Facebook applications and also allowing the users to create their own applications. This trend has not only implied the inclusion of yet another SNS into our representation framework, but has also added new features and possibilities for the self-representation of Puerto Rican soldiers.

Another aspect I had to come to terms with was the censorship and severe scrutiny of how the soldiers use and access the Internet. In the case of the WOT, while the insertion of soldiers in the SNS has become very popular among the ranks, it has also generated many controversies in the command and control organization of the military. Today, with the easy access to new media technologies, such as digital cameras, webcams, and cell phones, information has become instantly publishable through SNSs, which causes a security problem for the military desire to control and filter all warzone information. A soldier now merely has to gain access to the Internet to instantly complain, commiserate, and celebrate their victories and failures with photos, audio excerpts and texts. They offer more than war stories; they also reveal images from the WOT. Yet, in August 2009, the U.S. Marine Corps banned its troops from logging into Facebook, MySpace, and other social network sites, arguing that doing so was a possible security risk. According to Associated Press, the corps issued an order stating that the Internet was being used as a haven for malicious behavior, and that social sites were exposing information to adversaries[9]. However the military settles the problem of private Internet use, surely the access and use of SNSs will continue, building on the precedents set over the course of WOT, which has led scholars such as Weideman (2007) to conclude that said conflict is the U.S.'s first global Internet war.

But the truth is that the advances and accessibility of digital/social media have had the same effect on Puerto Rican soldiers as they have had on civilians, given this unparalleled space for self-representing themselves in SNSs, UGCs, and other online

spaces: it unlocked an obvious demand. The spaces of self-representation are increasingly visual and textual, and also very dynamic. For example, SNSs such as MySpace and Facebook, and UGCs such as YouTube, are emerging as preferred platforms in which digital stories from the battlefield, in spite of the doubts of the upper command, are being produced, archived, and distributed daily. To encompass this material demands not only the kind of traditional a textual and discourse analysis that has been used in the past to interpret the discourses of ordinary life, but also other creative methods, such as online ethnography.

Harvesting the SNSs

The objects of study analyzed in the present research are to a large extent profiles that have been created on MySpace and Facebook. Consequently, selecting the units of analysis is one the most important elements in the proposed methodology. The collection of these profiles was influenced by the nature of the SNS. In the case of MySpace, criteria for analysis were the search engine categories used for generating units of analysis on a preliminary approach: gender (male and female); age group (18-35); civil status (single, in a relationship, married and divorced); location (Iraq and Afghanistan); and ethnicity (Latino/Hispanic, Black, White, Other). The reason for selecting White, Black, and Other is because many Puerto Ricans don't perceive themselves as part of the Latino/Hispanic racial category. In contrast, they have other ways of looking at their race, some of them classifying themselves as White, Black, or Other. Categories regarding Background Lifestyle (such as Body Type, Height, Education, Smoker, Drinker, Religion, Income, Children, and Sexual Orientation) were not relevant criteria for finding my units of analysis. The search engine generated, at the bounds of the time I

was making my final cut, approximately 3,845 profiles. Not all of them were from Puerto Rican soldiers. Nevertheless, in order to determine which profiles belonged to Puerto Rican soldiers, access to public profiles was necessary, followed by close observation of visual and textual codes pointing to their Puerto Ricanness. Once a profile was identified as eligible for study, identifying other Puerto Rican military personnel became easier by using their friends network, which are accessible on the profiles and create an implicit message concerning the person so profiled.

Facebook is more opaque, because end user determined privacy levels are such that search engines failed to find all of the specific units of analysis that I was interested in. The SNS's nature requires concrete elements such as email and/or users' full name for finding profiles. I got around this by using available "Groups" within Facebook, which are not blocked. I searched groups with titles that referred specifically to Puerto Rican soldiers. A few examples of the groups are (originally in Spanish) "For our Boricua soldiers," "Boricuas in Iraq: show them your support," and "Puerto Rican soldiers." By joining the groups, access to the friend network was granted, making it easier to identify possible units of analysis. Since most Facebook profiles are private, it was necessary to send a 'Friend Request' to each profile in order to gain access to them.

Searching for videos in UGC sites such as YouTube required using the website's own search engine. Keywords used are as follows: Puerto Rican + Military, Puerto Rican + soldiers, Boricua + soldiers, Puerto Rico + Army, Puerto Rico + Iraq, Service Men + Puerto Rico, Puerto Ricans + Afghanistan, and so on. In the same way, the option called "Related Videos" was used for identifying other possible units of analysis. Some sections within YouTube which shall be considered are "Name," "Channel," "Views," and "About Me."

Once I found a relevant profile or video from MySpace, Facebook, and YouTube, I saved and archived the profile for textual analysis purposes. Textual analysis observes the visual, audio, and textual codes. Subsequently, by using discourse analysis, I was able to specify the coded interplay that unveils the articulation of identities. In order to find and adapt these codes, I used methods of online ethnography, to which I will now turn.

Considering an Online Ethnography for SNSs

While doing a preliminary approach to these profiles I found myself navigating through them. In an informal fashion, I took notes on possible similarities, saving pictures and comments, and linking what was being observed online to the offline space that these profiles referenced. Yet, the observations gathered lacked formal coherence. Slater (2002) has suggested this kind of diffuseness might be a consequence of the fact that "virtuality" is the structuring framework of the Internet. He adds that virtuality has become "a condition in which materiality is self-evidently in doubt for both participants and analysts, in which the 'thingness' is ambiguous and unreliable, in which textual constructions can be treated as if they are real" (p. 227).

Given the nature of the venue, we propose performing an online ethnography (also known as cyber ethnography, virtual-ethnography, net-nography[10], and more recently web-nography) of the soldier's profiles. Such a methodological approach extends traditional ethnographic studies by: a) transposing the physical field site by moving to an online environment and; b) changing from the observation of co-located, face-to-face interactions to technologically-mediated interactions in online networks and communities (boyd, 2007a). Abdelnour-Nocera (2002) established four parallelisms between the ethnography of offline and online realms: a) familiarization with the venue;

b) participant observation; c) interview with key informers; and d) concluding analysis. But beyond any different conception, this methodological approach entails both benefits and challenges to the investigator.

One of the method's advantages is that it enables the researcher to contact a geographically dispersed population and, therefore, the proposed methodology can be useful in studying transnational phenomenon: international research can be done without incurring the costs of travel, lodging, food, etc. Crichton and Kinash (2003) describe online ethnography as a method in which one actively engages with people in online spaces in order to write the story of their situated context, informed by social interaction. They add that the interaction "involves a researcher and participant engaging in conversation and meaning making through repeated, revisited and jointly interpreted conversations which support reflection and revision." However, this technique has raised several concerns. What ethical guidelines and/or consideration should be followed in this kind of research? Are we following the same ethical guidelines of physical ethnography? Are we creating a new one?

Several authors (Paccagnella, 1997, Mellins, 2007) admit that researchers have so far not reached consensus on ethical guidelines in this area, due in part to the continuing changes in the structure of cyber-interaction. The blurring boundaries of categories such as alive/not alive, public/private, published/unpublished, writing/speech, interpersonal/mass communication, and identified/anonymous complicate the direct application of onsite ethical practices to online research. Madge (2007) argues that "the debate surrounding online research ethics is a work in progress and the ethical challenges are not simple. Indeed, it is clear that many nuances to this debate will evolve as Internet-mediated research becomes a more mainstream and sophisticated methodology" (p. 655).

In fact, my impression from reading articles on SNS research is that the ethical dimension is often not discussed in detail.

According to IRB philosophy, a research which entails human subjects should follow three principles: a) minimizing the risk to human subjects (beneficence); b) ensuring that all subjects consent and are fully informed about the research and any risks (autonomy); c) promoting equity in human subject research (justice). Yet, my initial concern was to decide if my research specifically deals with human subjects. The University of Texas' IRB has included a section in their website that contains their position toward Internet research. They state:

Internet communication is extensively used and provides access to an enormous amount of information to "Internet communities." Access to these communities and the information associated with them raises a number of ethical questions and challenges for researchers and IRB. Perhaps the biggest challenges that are faced relate to privacy and informed consent. In their research proposals, according to the University of Texas at Austin, researchers should, at a minimum describe:

> The Internet methods and technology that will be used to interact with "Internet communities." Potential risks and benefits of the research and how risks will be minimized.
>
> The informed consent process that will be used, i.e., how Internet community members will be informed that research data is being collected, how community members can "opt-out" of having their data collected, etc. or justify why a waiver from the requirement to obtain informed consent is appropriate.
>
> The methods they will use to assure protection of privacy for subjects and how confidentiality of the data will be provided.

Thus, the very guidelines in place incorporate large ambiguities about the standard of ethical practice. Denise Carter (2005) states the same ethical principles that apply to offline researches should be applied to those online. She distinguishes "the principle of

non-malfeasance, the protection of anonymity, the confidentiality of data, and the obtaining of informed consent" (2005, p.153). However, as a result of her research about ethical implications of data mining on Facebook, Lauren Solberg (Solberg, 2010) argues that the nature of SNS and the Internet understood as a public space challenge traditional concepts like anonymity. She states:

> Because Facebook users should generally have limited expectations of privacy with respect to any information they post on their Facebook pages, most research studies involving data mining on Facebook should not require IRB review, not even to deem the project exempt. The Internet is a public space, and even with the password protections, security settings, and strict contractual terms of use that Facebook offers, Facebook users ultimately assume the risk that information posted on the Internet, and particularly on a social networking site, may become publicly available. (Solberg, 2010)

Since I am only lurking through the profiles and not actively contacting the soldiers, there is not any of what is traditionally considered human interaction, and thus, human subjects are not being studied in the usual social science sense – I neither recruit people for interviews or surveys. Therefore, my research is exempt from any IRB reviews. However, I did recognize that given the levels of privacy that are actively being created for these SNS, it is becoming more challenging to access certain parts of their profiles (i.e. certain photo galleries).

ORGANIZATION OF THE MANUSCRIPT

I divided this manuscript in four chapters in addition to an Introduction and a Conclusion. On Chapter I, 'Saving Pvt. Fulano de Tal: A Cultural History of Representations of the Puerto Rican Soldiers in Television and Film', I will discuss the limited repertoire of images of Puerto Rican soldiers in TV and film. I will look at fiction and non-fiction narratives that deal with the conflicts in which America, and by default,

Puerto Rico has been engaged since 1941: World War II, Korea, and Vietnam conflicts, until the current so called War on Terror (WOT). My argument is that, besides the massive omission of this history, the images and motifs that do escape de facto social censorship will be in conversation with those self-representations discussed on Chapter II, 'Heroes from Another Online Land: The Boricua Soldier in Social Networking Sites'. This chapter is the result of four years of the process of online ethnography that I described above. Here I analyze the instances of self-representation of Puerto Rican soldiers in SNS, particularly on MySpace and Facebook, under the hypothesis that is common to internet researchers that the Internet created an alternative space where digital stories are currently being produced, circulated, archived, and distributed every day. My interest was seeing how that a colonial-ethnic subject inflects space. Chapter III, 'Mash-up Identities: Puerto Rican Soldiers in User-Generated-Content Scene', explores the ways Puerto Rican soldiers, embedded in mash-up cultures, uses UGCs platforms to upload videos that transform the soldiers from passive consumers of images to active producers of content, which tend to disrupt dominant narratives of power. The fourth chapter, title 'States of Digital Mourning: Web Memorializing Puerto Rican Soldiers in the 21st Century', explores the emergence of web memorials dedicated to the Puerto Rican soldiers. I will focus on two different trends in web memorials dedicated to the fallen Puerto Rican soldiers: those spontaneous/unintended; and corporate-sponsored web memorials. My main argument is that these instances of self- representation in online spaces are in conversation with the moments of silences and misrepresentations of Puerto Rican soldiers in traditional media, but also have become acts of enunciation in which the particular Puerto Ricanness of the Puerto Rican serviceman is affirmed within complex, layered histories of imperialism, racism, heterosexism, and second-class citizenship.

Chapter I: Saving Pvt. Fulano de Tal: Images of the Puerto Rican Soldier in Television and Film

In my search for some documentary trail that would indicate the way the Puerto Rican soldier has figured in the American public imaginary, I stumbled upon a World War II editorial in Yank,[11] a U.S. Army weekly propaganda magazine, published in 1944. Here, for a fleeting instant, the 55,000 Puerto Ricans who served in the war are recognized by Lou Stouten, a sergeant, who states:

> In addition, *Pvt. Fulano de Tal*, Puerto Rico's Pvt. John Doe, is a good soldier. He usually stands two or three inches shorter than his Americano brother. He is stocky, high-cheeked, muscular, bronzed and hardened by training in the tropical sun. He's a crack shot and handy with the bayonet. He knows his jungle warfare [...] *Fulano* loves his rice and beans, and to the great happiness of any soldado Americano who may mess with him, he eats these staples once or twice a day. He also loves to sing and dance, mostly rumba. […] The Puerto Rican GI has a real sense of humor but, like all Latinos, is proud and touchy about his *honra* of his beloved island. His blood is of the Spanish conquistadores, of the ancient Borinquen Indians and of various European nationalities that have visited his island since its discovery by Columbus in 1493. Spanish is still the language of most Puerto Ricans. But *Fulano* is a citizen of the U.S. by act of Congress, like all his people […] respects American efficiency, education and high standard of living, and he has a hankering to see the States after the war is over, just as the average soldado Americano down here plans to pay a return visit to *La Isla del Encanto* (the isle of Enchantment) someday. […] He [the Puerto Rican soldier] and his island have grown in maturity and stature by playing their part in this war, by their sacrifices in discomfort, hunger, and blood (June 23, 1944, p. 9).

The author's rhetoric, immersed in the New Deal liberalism that was, for the most part, the official discourse of the war, engages in a process of othering at different semantic levels. On the level of nature: the soldier's physiognomy is shorter and his skin darker. On the level of communication: his language is Spanish, not English – which is suggested by the way Stouten inserts certain key words in Spanish. On the level of culture: his singing and dancing skills are noted, as is his cuisine of rice and beans, which is treated half jocularly as a culture feature that leads to the "great happiness of any soldado

Americano who may mess with him…" The master trope, here, is about a subaltern subject who is on the way to assimilation. Into a history that is other – from the Spanish conquistadors to the Indians inhabitants of the Island – intruded an American Congress that voted in citizenship for Puerto Ricans (and whose power, rooted in the occupation of Puerto Rico, is left tactfully blank). In this narrative, "Pvt. Fulano de Tal"- and by implication, the island itself – has come to a certain point in its civilizational trajectory, that his situation side by side with American soldiers presages closer relations between mainland and the "La Isla del Encanto". Stouman's ethnic portrait of the Puerto Rican soldier enrolls him in the great democratic anonymity of the army by giving him the name "Fulano de Tal" [the Spanish equivalent to "John Doe"]. Interestingly, both John Doe and Fulano de Tal exist as a sort of promise of signification once they are out of the army – within it, they exist as void signifiers. And indeed, given the omnipresent forgetting of *Fulano de Tal* in mainstream media and histories, he never did acquire a signifier in the American imaginary.

The stock of images portraying Puerto Rican soldiers and/or veterans is severely limited by the refusal to grant them any attention space. When they assume some marginal mention, the images range from a funny, chubby inept soldier to the outrageous Vietnam veteran who cannot adjust to society; from dysfunctional soldiers who return home after their failed mission in the War on Terror (WOT), to multiple cases of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In this chapter, I will survey these representations in national television and film during the last sixty years, which is where the figure of the soldier has been burned into the public consciousness, both on the mainland and, to an extent that I will show, in Puerto Rico.[12] The chosen time responds to the advent of television in Puerto Rico during the late 50's, post-WWII and Korea, and including Vietnam, and the two Middle East Wars. My argument is that many current self-

representations that occur in digital/social media environments are informed not only by the existential experiences of the soldier, but by their heuristic use of the few images that have been circulating in traditional media during the last six decades of the Puerto Rican soldier – or, more likely, by the blank left in that place, as silence and invisibility has been doled out as the media fate for Puerto Rican service in the U.S military.

I will begin this chapter with a discussion of the articulation of what I refer to as the "Jibaro Soldier" in Puerto Rican TV. This character embodies the archetype of the jíbaro, who, underneath his military uniform, preserves the comforting essence of the supposed characteristics of Puerto Rican white rural workers, such as humbleness and innocence, as they have been formed and stored in the archive of national memory. The mythical white Puerto Rican peasant, according to Lilian Guerra (1998), has become "the central figure of Puerto Rican nationalism" (p. 3), giving occasion for the race coded marginalization of other Puerto Ricans on the Island. For this reason, I will discuss the character Soldado Manteca (interpreted by Jose Miguel Agrelot), a Gomer-Pyle-like[13] character that first appeared on the late 60s in the Puerto Rican televisual landscape. Then I will discuss the articulation of two comedy characters portraying mentally ill veterans from the Vietnam generation: ''Herminio Domínguez" (interpreted by Raul Carbonell) and "El Veterano" (interpreted by Juan Manuel Lebrón), who played in a series of situation comedies produced by Puerto Rico's commercial television networks[14] throughout the 80s, and early 90s, with sporadic appearances in more contemporary television shows and stand-ups. Even though both characters are veterans from the same war, they have completely opposite views about the military. Through these characters, the imaginary of the Puerto Rican soldier is relegated to comedic roles that marginalize issue of war, colonial subjectivity, masculinity, race and imperialism that would

otherwise be indicated by their military service. My interest is to position these characters in the political unconscious of the televisual space of comedy in Puerto Rico.

I want to interpret, as well, more contemporary representations made by public broadcasting television in Puerto Rico (Puerto Rico Public Broadcasting Corporation, also known as TUTV): *Las guerreras* (2007) (WIPR-TV), which take the soldier figure out of the comic framework. The miniseries is the only media representation ever shown on Puerto Rican television that focused on the role of Puerto Rican women from several angles--mother, wife, veteran. This production respond to the small-screen call for proposals by TUTV during Gov. Calderón's administration (2000-2004), which was extended to the Gov. Acevedo Vilá's administration (2004-2008).

In this chapter, I will focus on television, mostly because, as Arlene Dávila (1998) tells us, in the island, television is "a primary tool in the growth of modern consumer society and in the imagining of a Puerto Rican national community" (p.454). However, representations of Puerto Rican soldiers are not exclusive to local television. During the late 60s, a Puerto Rican veteran from the Korean War was portrayed in the film, *La Noche de Don Manuel* [Don Manuel's Night] (1967). The forty-minute film was produced by the DIVEDCO, a government agency created in the mid-40s by governor Luis Muñoz Marín. The original purpose of the DIVEDCO was to vertically integrate the rural population into the ongoing industrialization and urbanization processes that were changing Puerto Rico's human geography. The film confronts the role of the "cacique del barrio" (rural community leader) with a young veteran who returns from the Korean War. There is a striking contrast between the film's portrayal of this veteran and the portrayal of veterans after the 80s, which show the influence of changing norms and a changing local film industry, aiming to enter a transnational market.

In 1998, Puerto Rico produced its first full-length film solely dedicated to war: *Héroes de otra patria* [Heroes from Another Land] (Ortiz, 1998). The film, written and directed by Iván Dariel Ortiz, follows the life trajectories of two Puerto Rican soldiers, with opposing views on war, who get lost together in the middle of jungle combat in Vietnam. Later in the 2000s, two feature films about WOT were produced under limited budget constraints--*Irak vive en mí* [Iraq lives within me] (Ramos-Perea, 2008) and *El Lenguaje de la Guerra* [The Language of War] (Sued, 2008). The films openly criticize militarization, the WoT, and U.S. occupation policies.

I will conclude my chapter with a series of observations concerning self-representation of Puerto Rican identity in documentary, taking up themes that I will follow in my investigation of self-representation practices in digital/social media. As the privileged object of my reflection, I will focus on the appearance of non-fictionalized representations of the Puerto Rican soldier in the TV documentary *The Borinqueneers* (Figueroa-Soulet, 2007). The documentary was the first one of its kind exclusively dedicated to the Puerto Rican soldier, and it is important because it was broadcast nationally. It was directed by a female Puerto Rican, aligning it in a feminist tradition of film works on national identity, imperialism, and discrimination (i.e. Ana María García, Frances Negrón-Muntaner, etc.). The documentary gained an even wider audience when PBS chose to broadcast it during the controversy that emerged from excluding Latino soldiers in Ken Burns' World War II documentary *The War* (Burns, 2008).

My interest on these examples is to ground the possibilities that formed the horizon of articulation confronting those who wanted to represent themselves in digital spaces. The Puerto Rican soldier's representation dynamics in traditional media, such as film and television, established certain traits and tropes that are carried over into the Internet sphere, and are either accepted or challenged in that sphere. I will explore these

representations according to Stuart Hall (Hall, 1997) sense, in which a language and knowledge systems about the Puerto Rican soldier work together to produce and circulate meanings. In this regard, representation of the Puerto Rican soldiers becomes the process or channel or medium through which these meanings are both created and reified.

The present study is limited to audiovisual media; radio has not figured as a medium of choice for representing Puerto Rican soldiers, and during my preliminary research I found no instance of any radio documentary about them. Similarly, as my research interest deals mostly with visual culture, I decided not to include the printed media in my main project. Nevertheless, I would like to point out that the Puerto Rican soldier indeed has held an important position during wartime both in printed media and in radio. In a preliminary survey, however, I observed that coverage was limited to Boricua soldier farewells, arrivals, and/or deaths--there was scarce information on daily life in the battlefield. Hence, the stock of self-reflective images in the consciousness of a typical Puerto Rican soldier in the WoT probably was derived from the small and big screens.

I must admit that surveying soldier representations was challenging. Changes in Puerto Rican government and local bureaucracy made access to texts such as *Las guerreras* impossible. The audiovisual media archive at University of Puerto Rico's School of Communications, however, did provide me with clips from El veterano and Soldado Manteca. I was also able to access material through digital archives in user-generated-content sites, such as YouTube.

My interpretation attempts to take into account the cultural and industrial aspects that shaped these representations. For example, Soldado Manteca, El veterano, and Herminio Dominguez are all comedic characters about and from the Vietnam generation, while *Las guerreras*, and *The Borinqueneers* mark themselves as "serious" and came into existence as part of the programming strategies conducted by local and national public

television. This chapter's ultimate argument is that the Puerto Rican soldier's self-representational practices in social media do not occur in a cultural imagery vacuum, but reference a limited stock of images that have been in circulation in the popular media for more than three decades.

RETURNING TO THE ETHNIC UNITS: IN SEARCH OF THE PUERTO RICAN SOLDIER

Research on Puerto Rican soldier representation in the media is nonexistent. Aside from the film review of *The Borinqueneers* by Silvia Álvarez-Curbelo in 2008, my exhaustive search on the subject did not yield a single academic work on the media image (or lack of it) of Puerto Rican soldiers. For this reason, I took up the task of searching for the Puerto Rican soldier within the narrower framework of specific wars, thus exploring academic production that might have contained material related to the subject. As a result, I found Álvarez-Curbelo's review, which was itself derivative on a work that did deal with Puerto Rican soldiers. Yet the author keyed his comments mostly to the notion of the "Pan-Latino" soldier--service members who belong to multiethnic regiments or integrated in platoon ensembles. According to Slotkin (2001), integrated spaces "establish the platoon as a microcosm of the American people" (p. 480), a military unit that, for instance, in narratives from World War I and World War II, could not have existed given the politics of segregation in the military. Slotkin (2001) states:

> African Americans and Japanese Americans served in racially segregated units, for the most part under white officers. There was no racial integration below the regimental or company level, though some white regimental combat teams had African-Americans companies attached (p. 470).

Mary Beltrán (2009) singles out Arnaz in *Bataan* (1943), a movie about a thirteen-member, multiethnic regiment which, in Hollywood fashion, is completely color blind, as

racial or ethnic differences are never mentioned. On ethnics platoon ensembles, however, one can recognize Latinos through cultural codes, such as skin color, spoken accent, and religious allusions to Catholicism (rosaries, scapulars, etc.) The Latino soldier was never a main character. Marita Sturken (1997) recognizes that even though most of the Vietnam War films included a Latino character, they were always in secondary roles.

If film narrative required mentioning a Pan-Latino soldier's ethnicity, it would be Mexican American, even though this identity distinction would not generate any significant subthemes in the story. Such is the case in characters played by Latino actors like Desi Arnaz in *Bataan* (1943), Ricardo Montalbán in *Battleground* (1949), Anthony Quinn in *Guadalcanal Diary* (1943), Trini López in *The Dirty Dozen* (1967), and John Leguizamo in his role as Antonio Díaz in *Casualties of War* (1989). Lipsitz (2006) problematizes the lack of ethnic soldiers in war films. In his work about Vietnam War films, he argues that:

> …nearly every Hollywood film about the Vietnam War tells it story from the perspective of white males. Yet the disproportionate numbers of African Americans and Latinos on the front lines in the actual war's combat situation complicate the racial politics of Vietnam, preventing a simple binary opposition between whites and Asians. Most often, these films depict initial hostilities between distrustful groups of whites and blacks, who then bond through the shared experiences of combat. Asian American soldiers are almost absent; Latino soldiers appear rarely (p. 89).

Clint Eastwood's *Flags of our Father* (Eastwood, 2006) and *Letters from Iwo Jima* (Eastwood, 2008) sparked a controversy for not including a single ethnic soldier in its narrative. The situation sparked a harsh reaction by director Spike Lee, who claimed that "Clint Eastwood made two films about Iwo Jima that ran for more than four hours total, and there was not one Negro actor on the screen" Yet this type of controversy is not new.

A year before, in 2007, a controversy raged around Ken Burns' documentary, *The War*[15]. As I wrote in the Introduction, the exclusion of Latinos from seventeen hours of World War II documentary in the original version triggered an outraged reaction from Latino activists and scholars. However, most of the debate was engrossed by the disappearance of Mexican Americans. Very few articles or public debates made the case that, among the representative soldiers that were made invisible in Burns' account were the ones representing the more than 50,000 Puerto Ricans who served. This lack was due, most likely, to a whole media history of invisibility, which relies on the false equivalency between Puerto Ricans and other Americans because both are born citizens by Congressional act, and therefore any representative of the American soldier represents the Puerto Rican one. As far back as 1944, however, Lou Stouten could see through this idea – as I showed above.

Facing a lack of academic work on the invisibility that cloaked the whole history of the Puerto Rican soldier in the media in both the island and the mainland, I hope to shed light in this chapter on exceptions, the few representations dating back over sixty years. This chapter is not a comprehensive study: the themes I am pursuing do not allow an in depth discussion of the complex junctures of codes (political and cultural) that have operated to create both the exclusion and the marginality. My goal here is simply to outline a cultural trajectory within a history and industry framework.

SOLDADO MANTECA: THE ARTICULATION OF THE JÍBARO SOLDIER

Gomer Pyle U.S.M.C (1964-1969) was a highly ranked television comedy that is still known by name even to those who never saw it. It stretched over five years, coincidentally years in which some Americans were fighting in Vietnam while other

Americans were protesting in the streets and on campuses against the war in Vietnam. Starring Jim Nabors (who played the role firstly on *The Andy Griffith Show*), the show tells the story of Gomer, a clumsy gas-station clerk from a fictional countryside town, Mayberry, North Carolina. He decides to leave Mayberry to join the Marines (Debolt & Baugess, 2011). From the point of view of television history, the show may be most important for helping set a trend for spinoffs in American television. The Gomer Pyle of the series, like the character on *The Andy Griffith Show*, was portrayed as an innocent, almost sexless goof, always at the center of a tension between him and his drill sargeant, who was portrayed in much more masculine terms. Elizabeth Hirschman points out that Gomer Pyle embodies "a uniquely American archetype…powerful physically, but has the gentle, simple, honest nature of a small child or animal. Typically, these characters are not sexualized as men, or they often use their physical strength against others" (p. 73). She further argues that Pyle's persona aligns with certain stereotypes about the Southerner cultural identity. She argues that "because the rural South is seen as more pristine, natural and primitive and hence is more likely to give rise to such men" (p. 75). In this sense, Pyle's character articulates regional essentialisms, portraying a the rural South stereotype, where the military intrudes (as it did historically) as a modernizing and destabilizing element, which can only be parried by the Southerner subject's purity. The classical sitcom rigidly adhered to a narrative form that dictated the positions of the characters at the beginning and end of the episode. At the end of every episode of Gomer Pyle, then, Pyle's guilelessness and puzzled reception of his superior officer's taunts leads to one or another triumph, in which his" basic innate goodness triumphs" (Hirschman, 2000, p. 73).

Puerto Rico had its very own Gomer Pyle in *Soldado Manteca*. As Yeidy Rivero (2005) has pointed out, the Puerto Rican television industry has closely followed U.S.

formats, genres, concepts, and ideas. “In the case of Puerto Rico’s entertainment programming, these productions have created media artifacts that contain the cultural meanings associated with Puerto Rico’s social spaces, even though, in some cases, the “original” idea was “borrowed” from a “foreign” place” (p. 7). This was especially so in the era in which the American networks monopolized the airwaves. Since the advent of cable, a flood of other formats has affected all television programming. Soldado Manteca, which first appeared in 1968, was overtly a Puerto Rican adaptation of *Gomer Pyle U.S.M.C.*, using a formula created four years before on American television, which, though not known at a local level, was certainly known to the diaspora in the mainland.

U.S.M.C. Gomer Pyle and *El Soldado Manteca* have parallel elements. Both sitcoms take place at a military camp during the Vietnam War. Just like the rural Southern yokel, Pyle, Manteca came from the countryside. Both characters had a “superior” counterpart--Pyle had his wordily wise Sergeant Vincent Carter, and Manteca his always formal and dedicated General (the character had no given name). In both cases, a strictly formal archetype positioned higher in the hierarchy --sergeant/general--directly clashes with an innocent, sometimes foolish, soldier archetype lower in the hierarchy, which causes friction between the two, thus developing the sitcom’s story. Despite the apparent tensions between soldier and officer, in both comedies, the privates always get away with it at the end of the episode. This rehearses, under the guise of the military, one of the oldest of folk motifs – the fool, the youngest brother, or the peasant triumphing over the forces arrayed against him by the social hierarchy without overturning that hierarchy. In the notion of the “hidden transcript”, anthropologist James C. Scott has outlined the techniques by which the weak (through jokes, songs, stories, or ‘foolish behavior”) express their dissatisfaction with the strong while avoiding open confrontation. Of course, in reality, while Gomer Pyle and Manteca were getting in comic

trouble with higher officers, in Vietnam, grunts were beginning to "frag" officers who were felt to be too gung ho or disciplinary.

My suggestion is reading Manteca's articulation within the framework of what I call the "jíbaro soldier". Before going deeper into the concept, however, it is important to indicate what the viewers would surely know – the biography of the man who played Soldado Manteca. José Miguel Agrelot, born Guissepe Michel Agrelot, a middle-aged Puerto Rican comedian, was better known at the time for his routines as a radio and television host, as well as for his character Don Cholito--he actually created about 200 different characters. The actor's participation in *El show de las doce* [The midday show] (WAPA-TV), and also in radio show *Su alegre despertar*, [16] (WLUZ-AM), for over thirty years made Agrelot an everyday figure in Puerto Rican, popular culture imagery, becoming one of the local audience's favorite. Don Cholito was articulated as witty, outspoken peasant or *jíbaro*, who openly discussed politics, sports and popular culture with a comic twist.

The character Don Cholito wore a *pava*, a typical, handmade straw hat designed for outdoor labor and worn by Puerto Rican peasants since before the twentieth century[17]. The pava was the symbol utilized by the Popular Democratic Party (PDP), founded in 1938 by former governor Luis Muñoz Marín, and one of the two main Puerto Rican political parties (the other one is the pro-statehood New Progressive Party). The party supports Puerto Rico's right to self-determination and permanent union with the U.S. through the enhancement of Puerto Rico's current status as a U.S. commonwealth. The party's version of nationalism engages with the symbols of Puerto Rico's popular culture. "The pro-commonwealth party has become associated with a more folkloric definition of culture, which it helped foster during its tenure in the 1950s, while the pro-statehood party has generally tried to promote the view that Puerto Rico would remain culturally

distinct as a constituent state of the Union" (Davila, 1998, p. 454). Thus, Don Cholito can be seen as the embodiment of Puerto Rican *jíbaros*, and, by association, the incarnation of the main identity symbol promoted by the PDP.

Don Cholito conforms to a narrative that takes up the humble yet ultimately shrewd peasant, making him a platform for comment on politics and popular culture. The authenticity granted by the humble origins of the Puerto Rican *jíbaro* was a routine that was shared among most of Agrelot's characters, including Soldado Manteca. In this case, however, the *jíbaro* has traded his typical *pava* and machete for military props, such as an oversized helmet and poorly worn uniform and equipment. Linguistically, the name of the character, "Manteca" ("lard" in English) acquires special relevance in the character's configuration--it is a nickname indicating the soldier is out of shape. One thinks of the physical inferiority of Pvt. Fulano de Tal, with whom we started – and how Agrelot, presumably without having read Stouten's obscure article, still accumulates his character's comic repertoire around physical inadequacies in terms of U.S. standards. This serves as a metonymn for character inadequacies, such as lack of discipline and weakness of will. This situation will lead Manteca to become a soldier who is unable to carry out his assigned missions, which range from being the first man to reach the moon, jumping out of an airplane on enemy territory, and so forth. In each assigned mission, Manteca always finds an excuse for not completing his task.

From the available episodes at the media archive and in YouTube, the viewer can infer that Manteca was part of a military unit composed solely by Puerto Rican soldiers, which seems to correspond to the social reality of segregation in World War II and Korea. Then, the military was perfectly happy to create segregated units composed entirely of African Americans or Asian Americans, or Puerto Ricans. The 56th Infantry Regiment was one of the most notorious ethnic units composed by Puerto Ricans during

World War II. The same can be said of the 65th Infantry Regiment in Korea. Until the end of the Korean war, the U.S. military was an image of U.S. society, segregated according to race, ethnicity and religion (Bruscino, 2010). Even though Manteca was in a Vietnam Military Camp, when this era had passed, the lag in cultural memory is significant, and brings with it other slightly dated comic features: For example, the unit speaks only Spanish, and is always subpar due to its ethnonationality. Most importantly, in terms of the dynamic of the series, this creates a distinction between him and his superior, the White American Captain. Even though Manteca is White –the jibaro in essence is constructed as a white peasant- his ethnonationality marks him as different from the point of view of white mainland Americans. Having Manteca in an Ethnic Unit corresponds to the social fact that, in words of Rivero (2005), "in the eyes of the white Americans, Puerto Ricans were a racial other" (p. 48). Within this framework, Manteca is part of an ethic platoon that, due to the officers' attitude, is destined to fail.

The American captain leading Manteca's unit is played by actor, producer, director, and screenwriter Jacobo Morales (although on some occasions, actor and producer Tommy Muñiz played the General). Morales' interpretation is overtly key to let the audience know his type--he is white and blue-eyed, and speaks Spanish as a second language with a clear American accent. Interesting power-relations stemming from language use emerge here. On the one hand, Manteca is unable to salute his superiors properly in English--he speaks broken English. But on the other, Manteca constantly makes fun of his Captain because of his language limitations--he speaks broken Spanish. Bruscino argues that that in the military, "the men underwent intensive training in soldiering, English and Americanization efforts of the duration of the fighting…And indeed the army became the primary vehicle for over 150,000 alien soldiers to become citizens of the United States during the war (p. 53). The fact that Manteca could not speak

proper English made him less of American, thus affirming the second-class citizenship status. In one particular episode, the Captain and the General talk about Manteca's unit performance:

> Capitán: General, que sorpresa agradable verle. Adelante. [1]
>
> General: Empezaré por decirle que estoy muy molesto.
>
> Capitán: Ah, caramba, siéntese, siéntese.
>
> General: Lo que voy a decirle no tomará mucho tiempo. He recibido quejas de que este campamento es un desastre; de que sus soldados son una vergüenza para el ejército; que andan sin insignias, sin gorra, y hasta con zapatos blancos.
>
> Capitán: ¡Perdone, perdone! Lo que pasa es que yo no tengo la culpa de que me hayan asignado los soldados más malos de todo el ejército.
>
> General: Para eso está usted aquí, para enderezarlos. Quiero que empiece por imponerle disciplina. Por desarrollar su espíritu competitivo. Invéntese un concurso, cualquier cosa. Pero exíjale, primeramente, responsabilidad.

From the beginning of the episode, the Puerto Rican unit is described as the one "with the worst soldiers in the entire army," thus implicitly linking performance with ethno-nationality. The soldiers lack discipline, don't understanding basic rules of the military institution (i.e. the proper use of the military uniform), and don't seem to care. The

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[1] Captain: General, it's good to see you. Come in.
General: I will begin by telling you I am quite displeased.
Captain: Oh, my goodness, please, sit down.
General: This won't take long. I have received several complaints: the camp is a disaster, the men are a disgrace to the army. They don't wear their colors, or their hats, and sometimes they even walk around in white shoes.
Captain: I'm so sorry. It's not my fault I've been given the worst men in the entire army.
General: That is why you're here, to set them up straight. I want you to start by teaching them discipline. By developing their competitive spirit. Create a contest, anything. But first, demand responsibility.
[My translation]

conversation sets up the comic situation: the general suggests some type of 'contest' to boost morale. This type of suggestion suggests that the soldiers are infantile, easily roused like boys. Minutes after that, Soldado Manteca, enters into the scene with another soldier known as Gulembo (in Puerto Rican Spanish, "foolish, fragile, coward, soft"),[18] who never speaks:

> Capitán: Esta es la última oportunidad que les voy a dar. De ahora en adelante ustedes van a aprovechar cada minuto que tengan libre para convertirse...
>
> Manteca: ¡Que peste! –Apunta Manteca en forma de queja-
>
> Capitán: Cállese la boca -le grita-
>
> Manteca: La peste a tabaco -le exclama en forma desafiante al general-
>
> Capitán: No me interesa su opinión. Este es mi tabaco, allá usted con el suyo.
>
> Manteca: El Chief General de los EEUU dijo que los militares debian dar el ejemplo de no fumar.[2]

The scene shows the power dynamic between the incompetent middle manager – the Captain – and the shrewd peasant, Manteca. While the hierarchical order is usually such that the lower ranks are challenged about their most private business (for instance, their hygiene), here, the challenge is reversed, with Manteca complaining of the odor of tobacco. This creates a destabilizing effect within traditional power relations in which the subaltern faces his colonizer directly:

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[2] Captain: This is the last chance I'll give you. From now on, you'll make the most of your free time so you can become…
Manteca: It stinks in here! (Makes according gesture)
Captain: Shut up! (Yelling)
Manteca: It stinks of tobacco! (replies as if challenging)
Capitán: I don't want your opinion! This is my cigar, you take care of yours.
Manteca. The Chief U.S. General says officers should set an example by not smoking.

Capitán: Usted además de aprenderse eso, aprenda a convertirse en un soldado. Usted, soldado Gulembo, en adelante se encargará de mondar papas.

Manteca: No, no dejeme eso a mí. Yo le mondo diez mil papas por minuto.

Capitán: De ahora en adelante usted hará cosas de soldado de hombre. Usted va a disparar al blanco ahora.

Manteca: Mi mamá me dijo que no fuera a ningún sitio donde me pusieran a disparar armas de fuego. -mientras llora desconsoladamente-

Capitán: Pero caramba, en el ejército se brega con armas, se brega con pistolas.

Manteca: Lo mío es mondar papas, a mí me dijeron que iba a mondar papas y yo lo único que se hacer es mondar papas.

Capitán: Aquí tiene sus nuevos instrumentos de trabajo. -mientras le muestra dos armas de fuego-

Manteca: ¿Para qué es eso?

Capitán: Para tirar al blanco. Usted va a tirar en una tarjeta oficial, y me la va a traer a ver cuáles son los resultados. [3]

The sequence continues to follow the logic of the shrewd peasant, who cries like a child about violence, and presses upon the Captain a certain exchange: peeled potatoes for the violence of firing a gun. Peeling potatoes is a standard reference in military humor: it was considered one of the worst and most tedious jobs, commonly used as a punishment for minor infractions on duty. As in many folktales of the weak versus the strong, the weak

[3] Captain: Besides learning that, you must also learn to become a solider. Pvt. Gulembo, you are in charge of peeling potatos from now on.
Manteca: No, leave that to me. I can peel a thousand potatoes in one minute.
Captain: From now on you'll do real men stuff, like shooting a gun.
Manteca: My mama told me not to go anywhere they'd made me fire a gun. (Cries desperately)
Captain: My goodness! But the army is all about using guns and pistols.
Manteca: My thing is peeling potatos; they told me I was gonna peel potatos; and all I know is peeling potatos.
Captain: Here are your new working tools. (Shows him two rifles)
Manteca: And what is this for?
Captain: For shooting a target. You will shoot an official target and bring me the results.

uses his knowledge of the system, its institutionalized desire to exploit him, to subvert it. Manteca, putting himself at the bottom of the military chain, is actually finding a refuge from his exploitation. Weakness, here, becomes an empowering tactic. Manteca's comically exaggerated prowess as a potato peeler both extends the idea of his femininity and childishness and uses it to overturn the order of the father/officer, which puts his manhood (in actuality) in real danger.

Later on the episode, the General visited the Captain again, and discussed soldier improvement in target practice performance. Manteca showed up with the card that recorded his target practice marks, which shows an excellent performance. This pleases the Captain and the General, while the audience, which has learned to expect a trick, waits for the denouement: in the end, we learn that Manteca cheated and that in fact, he was never able to complete his goal. This is an example of how Manteca, who seems to be an innocent and incapable soldier, gets away with it. This is the situational pattern repeated over and over in Soldado Manteca's episodes.

The convention that both the audience and the program producers share goes back to what Scott (1990) calls "hidden patterns of resistance." In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, Scott argues that jokes, tricks, codes, and euphemisms are part of the repertoire of hidden transcripts of resistance created by the subordinates against those in power. An important aspect in Scott's argument is that resistance in these situations does not reside on the challenge or the act itself, which will be too expensive to the resisting agent. After all, the subaltern will be punished if his resistance fails. However, resistance's strength is measured by the subaltern's personal pleasure--in Manteca's case--in challenging power and in continuing to produce hidden transcripts which are gradually embedded at a popular level. In this way, Manteca develops his own hidden transcript system, noticed by the audience, and invisible, mostly, to the Captain as a

superior officer (although the Captain, as a middle level officer, suspects more than the General). Power relations are reversed here, turning Manteca into the sketch's hero, a position made possible by his articulation as a *jíbaro* solider.

In his work on the *jíbaro* as popular expression of Puerto Rican nationality, Guerra rehearses a series of arguments which seem to fit the Soldado Manteca persona. Guerra suggests that the *jíbaro*, displaced from the countryside, loses access to his/her lands due to the takeover of agriculture by capitalist practices underwritten by U.S. agribusinesses. Faced with such scenario, the idealized *jíbaro*, embodied by Manteca, who is subject to imperial domestication by the U.S. army, will be depicted as a sly champion of Puerto Rican identity, which doesn't have the strength to openly oppose U.S. hegemony in cultural, political, economic, social, and--in Manteca's case--military dimensions, but exercises its weakness strategically, to gain strength in certain situations and make them bearable. However, as the Puerto Rican population became increasingly urban, the idealized "*jibaro*" began to vanish. According to Torre, Vechchini and Burgos, "the consolidated jibaro began to disappear, moving to the towns and the cities of the Island, to newly improvised urban slums, to government sponsored housing projects" (Torre, Vecchini, & Burgos, 1994, p. 81). The kind of conventions shared by Soldado Manteca and the audience broke down – paradoxically, as a result of such penetrations into the private sphere as that of television, with its vast, commercializing resources. And in this scenarios, the characters of the mentally ill veterans appeared as the failure of modernity project proposed by Luis Muñoz Marín and embodied in the character of Manteca.

TELEVISUAL PUERTO RICAN SYNDROME: THE VETERANS IN PUERTO RICAN COMEDY

While I was doing my routine, Facebook status update, I noticed that an acquaintance from Puerto Rico posted on her status "Felicidades en el día de los locos!" (In English, "Congratulation on Crazy People Day!"). I took a moment to think who were "the crazy people" she was referring to. Minutes later, I came to realize that the status alluded to Veterans Day; a U.S. federal holiday observed every year on November 11 to honor military veterans.[19] Given my personal and academic relationship with the military, my immediate reaction was to elaborate and post a response to that person's status. But, in the meantime, I decided to observe the audiences reaction to her status. A couple of "Ja Ja" (in English "Ha Ha") and LOLs (Laughing out Loud), in addition to dozens of "Like" from friends approving her status, were the most common reactions to it. At a simple glance, the consensus view is that the veteran in Puerto Rico equals the idea of someone who is "loco" or mentally ill, or something to laugh at, or at least that the ideas are somehow statistically associated with each other.

Depictions of veterans as unadjusted and mentally ill come to us mainly from Hollywood's portrayal of the Vietnam War. According to George Swiers (1991), Hollywood straddled the public unease about the Vietnam War, in the early seventies, by making the Vietnam veteran a marketable villain. He states that their representations were those of "malcontents, liars, wackos, losers…heroin-addicted…psychotic…shiftless lazy, and wide eyed black" (in Sturken, 1991, p. 130). William Palmer (1985) argues that "the American movie industry and the American media reached the apex of their deployment of a distorted set of stereotypes of the Vietnam veterans…[and that]…movies distorted rather than clarified the identity of the more than four million Vietnam veterans" (p. 64). And even though many bet on a more "progressive" image of the "super veteran"[20] of the early 80s (in films like Rambo (1982, 1985, 1988) and

Missing in Action (1984, 1985, 1987) series), the most used Vietnam veteran's imaginary is the emotionally vulnerable, psychologically imbalanced and PTSD-suffering subject. Classic Vietnam War films, such as The Deer Hunter (1978), Coming Home (1978), and Born on the Fourth of July (1985), present a veteran imaginary in which he "struggles for visibility and reassimilation into an American society" (Palmer, 1995, p. 61).

Palmer dates the change in the image to early 80s television, which domesticated the soldier, added humor to characters, and toned down their violence. Some popular television shows included the unadjusted, funny veteran as part of the cast. For example, 80s television series The A-Team tells the story of four Vietnam veterans who decided to become vigilantes. Among the main characters, there was Captain H.M. "Howling Mad" Murdock (played by Dwight Schult). Murdock's "madness" included self-identification with fictional characters, hallucinations, and a deep obsession with video games and cartoons. Other shows--although not necessarily comedies--gave a comic twist to Vietnam veterans who became police or private investigators, such as Magnum, P.I. (1980-88) and Miami Vice (1980-88).[21]

After the disappearance of the series Soldado Manteca[22] from the televisual landscape, the image of the 'mentally ill' veteran became the sole TV depiction of the Puerto Rican soldier--now a veteran--within the limited inventory of media representations. I grew up watching comedy characters like 'Herminio Domingo Domínguez"[23] and El Veterano (The Veteran), two popular TV characters who took part as secondary characters in a series of sitcoms produced in Puerto Rico's commercial television throughout the 80s and early 90s. Their appearances in the sketches were sporadic, and most of the time, random and abrupt.

I propose a look at the configuration of the Puerto Rican Vietnam veteran in local television from various angles. First, there is the mockery of the denigrating medical

discourse such as the Puerto Rican Syndrome, mentioned in the Introduction. U.S. medical officers who witnessed Puerto Rican soldiers returning from the Korean War, going into states of "anxiety, rage, psychotic symptoms, and unpremeditated suicidal attempts (Gherovici, 2005, p. 29)" originally coined the clinical diagnosis as Puerto Rican Syndrome (PRS). Ultimately, though, the definition of PSR by U.S. medical officers superficially stereotyped an entire ethnonational group and transformed a statistically predictable result of exposure to long term combat into a serious mental health problem with an eccentric location. PRS, as an ethnically specific predecessor of PTSD, is both reproduced in the portrayal of soldier characters in the media, and yet simultaneously challenged through comedy. I also propose looking at characters as a repository for depoliticized characters like Manteca. Both Dominguez and El veterano assumed different specific political postures from the depoliticized discourse seen in Manteca.

Herminio Domínguez: The un-conscientious objector

Once the Vietnam War ended, the veteran parade in U.S. media began. As mentioned earlier, Hollywood found an audience for showing this archetype as being dominated by the character repertoire of emotionally disturbed and PTSD suffering individuals. In Puerto Rico, Herminio Dominguez became the first character of this type. Dominguez took the place in the TV imaginary formerly held by Manteca. From the comic situation of the military training camp, the Dominguez's character is commonly located in the city. There is a clear change from the subject begging for domestication (a soldier's apprentice) to the subject who cannot be controlled due to his PTSD, a move

from a docile, loveable subject to a man with sudden violent outbursts, from an apolitical sphere to politically defined antiwar stance.

Herminio Dominguez is played by singer-actor (and today, attorney) Raúl Carbonell, Jr., is also known in the world of Puerto Rican television for the other characters he played over three decades, such as Papo Swing, a salsa music aficionado; Pupe, a Neoyorican drunk; and Israel, an effeminate hair stylist obsessed with the local tabloids. Although Dominguez first appeared after the war, the character survived into our era. For example, it was part of *Show Goya* and *Cambia, cambia* (Teleonce). He also had cameos in *La tiendita de la esquina* (the store in the corner), *La bodega de Doña Cuca*, and *Calle 4* (WAPA TV).

Even though Dominguez wears civilian clothing (jeans and t-shit), he wears a helmet as a prop alluding to the Vietnam War. He also often carried a gigantic sledgehammer over his shoulders, which seems to indicate his work. It also serves as an instrument for his violent television appearances. He always appeared unexpectedly, emerging abruptly and disruptively in every sketch, walking fast, pacing uncontrollably from one side to the other. He would enter loudly, as if he wanted to be noticed, yelling, "Ajá, ajá, llego el que nadie esperaba".[4] While moving and screaming all over the studio, he would show nervous ticks and blink his eyes excessively. His behavior clearly presents a typical PTSD diagnosis: irritability or outbursts of anger, hypervigilance, jumpy and easily startled.[24]

Besides his PTSD, Dominguez had a noticeable political discourse, of a philosophical, existentialist, environmentalist, and pacifist nature. Here is an example fom *La bodega de Doña Cuca* (Teleonce, 1989):

[4] "Um-huh! The one none expected is here!" My translation.

> Horita, todo está igual, en el frente de batalla. Ya ustedes ven que todo está igual. Así es que cuando las cosas te vayan mal, como a veces te suelen ir, descansar acaso debes, pero nunca desistir. Uno nunca debe desistir porque si desistes, ahí está el problema… [Continua]…Como dice ese gran escritor, y dramaturgo, últimamente novelista, Luis Rafael Sánchez, en su voz de su personaje Píramo… ¿Qué era lo que decía? La gente es la que cambia, las cosas siguen igual. Obviate de las cosas materiales…(Balbucea) Fuera de control).[5]

As can be seen, Dominguez's monologues are constructed as though he were still on a battlefield, thus confirming his hallucinatory PTSD. In the same way, he interrupts his speech to mumble the phrase "out of control," thus showing an internal battle between his thought and his actions. This line, existentialist in nature, suggests an untiring, educated worker who knows how to express his ideas. References to Puerto Rican author Luis Rafael Sánchez point at an educated veteran. Yet everything changes when other characters enter the scene, which destabilizes Dominguez and creates irritability in him, always ending in some violent, PTSD related outburst. At the end of the sketch, Dominguez breaks all the tables in Doña Cuca's bodega when she calls him a "rata," or rat. The interesting part is that, for the other characters, Dominguez's behavior is normal or unsurprising. The conventions of the other characters and the audience accommodate his violent behavior; no one intervenes; they simply watch. Dominguez's otherness is constructed not only on violence and madness, but also on philosophy.

In an interview, Raul Carbonell Jr. described his role as Dominguez as "the most current of his characters, since he is not only a veteran, but also an existentialist and an ecologist; for example, the Vieques issue (the anti-militarization of the island) and the Taliban (in reference to the WOT) are nourishment for him, yet they are also topics often ignored by other producers" (February 15, 2002).[25] Most of his postures are in tune with

[5] "Right now, everything's the same at the battlefront. You can see everything's the same. So, when things go wrong for you, as they sometimes do, rest you must, but not desist. One should never desist, because if one does, therein lies the problem… As writer and playwrite, and lately, novelist, Luis Rafael Sánchez says, though his character Píramo… What was I saying? It is people who change; things stay the same. Forget material things… (Mumbles) Out of control." My translation.

those of a conscientious objector, and individual who has refused to engage in military service on the grounds of freedom of thought, conscience, and/or religion. Some of his monologues align themselves within pacifist, non-interventionist, non-resistant, or antimilitarist positions. But I would contend that Dominguez is an un-conscientious objector. In his particular case, the veteran is configured in madness, and enters an un-conscientious state which allows him to enter a discursive, antimilitary zone. For example:

> El planeta es mi país; Puerto Rico es mi casa. Las guerras no solo cobran vidas humanas, sino que le roban años a nuestro planeta. Fuera la Marina de Vieques![6]

In this example, an antimilitary sentiment is also connected with other dissident voices, for example, the environmentalist cause. Dominguez's position against naval presence in Vieques was founded on a broader line of support for the environment.

Although most topics in Dominguez's brief monologues are current, relevant, and pertain to the sociohistoric moment in which his performance takes place, his lines are spoken within a vacuum in the sketch. They do not connect to the rest of the narrative, which will marginalize the character. His monologues are generally more like soliloquies than dialogue. Dominguez's articulation as an un-conscientious objector is a step forward in the representation of Puerto Rican soldiers and/or veterans. According to the interview, the character is very influenced by Carbonell's ideas. Carbonell is an attorney, besides actor, singer, and comedian, which adds an overtone to Dominguez's configuration. For example, contrary to the portrayal of a *jíbaro soldier* presented in Manteca, Dominguez is educated, and has defined political views. However, this fact is

[6] "The planet is my country; Puerto Rico is my home. War not only take human life, but also years fom planetary life. Kick the Navy out of Viques!" My translation.

overshadowed by (and perhaps permitted by) violent PTSD manifestations. These symptoms are also evident, yet at a lesser level, in El veterano.

Whatchamacallit? Call it El Veterano

"Whatchamacallit!"[26] "Left-right-left-right-left-right!" "Porque yo me tomo las verdes, las amarillas y las colorás' ["'Cus I take the green ones, the yellow ones, and the red ones"]. These lines, spoken in broken English at an accelerated pace by actor, screenwriter, and singer, Juan Manuel Lebrón, have been made popular for more than three decades by El veterano, a bizarre, highly medicated Vietnam veteran obsessed with military lore. Lebrón began his comic career in Puerto Rico in the 70s, when he played Juanma for almost two decades with the late Awilda Carbia in family sitcom *En casa de Juanma y Wiwi* [At Juanma and Wiwi's] (Telemundo).

Lebrón's talent led him to play other characters in sketch-comedy programs such as *Los Kakukómicos* (Telemundo), which is where the El veterano character first became famous. Since then, El veterano has appeared in all commercial television channels in Puerto Rico. After a brief guest appearance in the variety show *El show de Chucho* (Rikavision), El veterano has also appeared in *El show de las 12* (Telemundo), had a cameo in film *La guagua aéra* Parte 2 ["The airbus, part two"], and, recently, appeared every two weeks in variety show *Entre nosotras* [Among us women] (Televicentro). As recent as 2010, his media relevance gave his a spot in a government campaign, exhorting citizen to wash their hands to prevent sickness.

Although the character is born and developed almost at the same time as Herminio Dominguez, the two characters show completely opposite idiosyncrasies. Contrary to Dominguez, whose ideas against the war were evident in the sketches, El

veterano's narrative is pro-war. This may be because Lebrón seems to have a past linked to the military. In an interview (Santiago, 2012), he reveals that the character was created due to the actor's interest in joining the army as a means for financially supporting his medicine studies. After the army rejected him due to a heart murmur, Lebrón remembers that, in one occasion, while working at a Rikavisión station (Channel 7), he found an old military uniform in the trash. He took it out and tried it on: El veterano was born. Lebrón believes that his character feeds on Vietnam veteran references, and from his father who served in World War II.

His pro-military ideas are evident on screen. Contrary to Dominguez, El veterano wears a full military uniform. Upon entering every scene, he always sings the tune of the national anthem--not the lyrics, but the first notes. He also shows an obsession with formation performance--saying, "left-right-left-right" as he walks--drills, and military salutes. These codes, although projected as mockery, are a product of his role as a mentally unadjusted subject, and reinforce a more formal respect toward them than his predecessor, Manteca, and his contemporary, Dominguez. El veterano does share PTSD manifestations with the latter, though--a long, lost look, talking loudly and quickly are but a few physical gestures both characters share. Similarly, El veterano's interventions are also disconnected and sporadic.

Most of the time, his appearances were out of context with the episode. This narrative convention makes the character look more marginal. El veterano's appearances are not limited to television sketches. He also sang original tracks during his participation in *El show del mediodía* (Telemundo). Accompanied by a merengue band, Lebrón would tell stories about his character through music, a fact that should not surprise us, because Lebrón is also a known tropical music performer (salsa and merengue) in Puerto Rico. [27] In one such intervention in *El show del mediodía*, El veterano sings:

Ahora voy a contarles la historia de un soldado

Que vino de la Guerra un poco tostado.

El Tipo se la pasa de arriba abajo.

Con su mochila al hombro, con su rifle cargado,

Llamando a su sargento de nombre Gonzalo[7]

The lyrics refer to veteran's madness by using the terms "tostado"--"looney" or "crazy" in Puerto Rican Spanish. The lyrics tell the story of an almost schizophrenic character, who is always wandering about wearing his military attire, and calling out to an imaginary sergeant named Gonzalo.

El pasa to' el dia llamando a Gonzalo

Si va para la tienda, llamando a Gonzalo

Si va para el teatro, llamando a Gonzalo

Se come a su popcorn, llamando a Gonzalo[8]

Although there is no information on who Gonzalo is, neither on the episodes nor on press releases or interviews, I propose a possible reading of the imagined subject. I view Gonzalo as El veterano's alter ego, his other self, who is able to promote himself to sergeant through his own madness. Gonzalo is the self which El veterano lost in Vietnam, and who the private is searching for in the civilian zone. This may be the reason why he

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[7] Now I'll tell you the story of a private
Who returned from the war a little bit looney.
The man is always running up and down,
A sack on his shoulder, his loaded rifle in his hands,
calling to a Sargeant named Gonzalo.
(My translation)

[8] He spends all day calling Gonzalo.
If he goes to the store, he's calling Gonzalo,
If goes to the movies, he's calling Gonzalo,
If the eats his popcorn, he's calling Gonzalo.
(My translation)

is always using the line, "Whatchamacallit!" as a search for an identity lost in the battlefield. The song goes on:

> Una cosa curiosa de este soldado
>
> Se toma sus pastillas con mantecado
>
> Por eso nunca anda malhumorado[9]

The lines are an allusion to pill cocktails prescribed for many Vietnam veterans with PTSD. In fact, the line that refers the "green ones, yellow ones, and red ones" is not only well known locally, but also identifies the character with mental illness. Yet, aside from his PTSD, El veterano is able to portray, although with a few contradictions, a message in favor of Vietnam War veterans. A spoken section of the track says:

> Que dijistes, yo no dije fuistes, el que fuistes fuiste tú. Mira, que bueno que sepas que yo no voy a hacer ningún KP (Kitchen Police). Qué bueno que sepas que yo fui Sargento 3 y 3 de Liga Atlética Policiaca de este país, del Cuartel de la 19. Además, nosotros los puertorriqueños hemos sido los Soldados más valientes. Y no lo digo yo, lo dicen los libros, que son leyenda. Left-Right-Left. Left-Right-Left. Left-Right-Left.[10]

El veterano places the Puerto Rican soldier in a privileged position in the army (although does so as part of a mad soliloquy). He challenges the Puerto Rican stereotype as an incompetent, cowardly subject by saying that Puerto Ricans are the bravest soldiers. This may be interpreted as an attempt to reset the imaginary of the coward, inherited from the Korean war, against which the discourse pushes. Yet he seems to contradict himself by saying that Puerto Ricans' courage is on the books, which are legend. This line

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[9] A curious thing about his soldier:
He takes his pills with icecream,
so he's never angry.

[10] What did you say? Well you are the one who said you! Look, I'm glad you know I ain't doing no KP. I'm glad you know I was a 3 up 3 down Sargeant in the Puerto Rico Police Athletic League, at the 19th bus-stop precinct. Besides, Puerto Ricans make the bravest soldiers. I'm not saying it; the books say so, and books are legend. Left-Right-Left. Left-Right-Left. Left-Right-Left.
(My translation)

undermines the veracity to the idea of Puerto Rican courage in battle, thus turning it into a product of legend, of myth, a story told from the past, popularly regarded as true, yet not verifiable.[28]

FEMALE WARRIORS IN PUBLIC TELEVISION

The Puerto Rico Public Broadcasting Corporation[29], under the leadership of Linda Hernández during the Gov. Calderón administration (2000-2004), turned to the mission of broadening the mandate of public television from strictly educational TV. For this reason, during Hernández's tenure, she issued a call for submissions of programs that would break with the public education paradigm, thus emulating commercial television. Proposals were prepared and guidelines outlined for the first time. Among the 300 received proposals, there was the special *Las guerreras* (2007). Although Linda Hernández left the corporation in 2004, the proposal was realized in 2007 during the Gov. Acevedo Vilá administration, under director Víctor Montilla.

Las guerreras is, until now, the most recent depiction of Puerto Rican soldiers in local television. The drama, written by internationally acclaimed writer Mayra Santos Febres and directed by Gilo Rivera, depicts the burdens of America's numerous wars through the eyes of three Puerto Rican women. It extends the presentation of the war from the soldier-centric perspective to that of their entire family. The series remembers World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq through the voice of several women who narrate the story of their fathers, husbands, uncles, and even themselves, once they have returned from combat.

The film begins with the Johanna Molina's story (played by Sara Jarque), an Army captain in Iraq, who was discharged after an ambush in Basora. She is sent back to

Puerto Rico to seek psychiatric help after suffering postwar trauma. Once in the island, she sees Dr. Julia Samán (played by Dolores Pedro), daughter of a female soldier she barely knew. The psychiatrist is dedicated to her profession, and also specializes in handling cases related to the military. Julia is friend of attorney Celina Ramos (played by Carola García), sister of a soldier in Iraq, who is trying a spouse abuse case against a veteran.

The production not only concentrates on the often overlooked issue of the war's collateral effects, but also breaks a stereotype representation pattern: the racial and gender specifics of the Puerto Rican soldier/veteran in local television. Until today, the soldier's archetype was limited to men, mostly white--except maybe El veterano--and with PTSD. Writer Mara Santos Febres (2007) comments on the matter:

> Pensé que el proyecto se engavetaría. Las razones eran varias: la protagonista es una mujer negra que no es esclava, ni puta, ni sirvienta; es una serie que evalúa la participación de la mujer en la guerra y que critica la política bélica e intervencionista de E.U. desde la 2nda Guerra Mundial hasta Iraq.[11]

Las guerreras includes female soldiers and veterans in its stock of images, as well as an Afro-Caribbean veteran. Beyond representing collateral effects from several wars, the series portrays the evolution of military culture in Puerto Rico. The latter is barely acknowledged in comedy representations, where the soldier/veteran is presented within a vacuum. Drama, then, opens a new possibility for new ideas on the topic and for new articulations of the soldier/veteran. Unfortunately, the special was only shown once on public television, and it is not available for rent or sale at any establishment, public, private, or virtual.

[11] I thought they would drop the project for many reasons: the protagonist was a black women not portrayed as a slave or as a whore or as a servant; it is a series that rethinks women participation in the war, and criticizes U.S. interventionist war policies from World War II to Iraq. (My translation)

FROM WORLD WAR I TO IRAQ: THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE PUERTO RICAN SOLDIER IN LOCAL FILM

Puerto Rico's film history is directly linked to the military presence of the U.S. on the island. According to research at the Puerto Rico General Archive (Flores-Carrión, 2012), the U.S. Navy ships brought more that soldiers and armament; they also brought the first film camera ever to come to the Island, thus marking our first experience with the medium. The images that were captured remain controversial due to their disputed veracity, as some historians argue that they really record the American invasion on July 25, 1898, through Guánica. However, that moment symbolically joined the twentieth century's primary visual medium to the moment of imperial violence that marked the beginning of the U.S. as a global power. Since that moment, visual language has tried to capture and perpetuate social, cultural, and political transformation in a national film language. Yet it is difficult to say that there has ever been a national film industry to the extent that it exists in, say, Cuba.

According to Sheila Reyes (2012), limitations regarding public and private subvention may have prevented the solidification of a local Puerto Rican film industry. Most Puerto Rican film production took place in the 1950s and 60s. After the inauguration of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico in 1952, modernization projects were implemented with the purpose of institutionalizing an up to date culture. Hence, organisms were created, such as the Puerto Rican Culture Institute and the Division for Community Education (DIVEDCO, in Spanish), dedicated to promoting and protecting the cultural nationalism project backed by the Gov. Muñoz Marín administration. The latter was the government educational agency in charge of promulgating Governor Luis Muñoz Marín's ideas about Puerto Rican culture and citizenship.

In the view of Cati Marsh Kennerley (2003), Muñoz Marín was committed to promoting an essentialized Puerto Rican culture centered on the idealization of traditional rural life, promoting democracy, while simultaneously creating a *jíbaro* pedagogy. This pedagogical narrative was built upon the rhetoric of maintenance of the "essential" characteristics of rural life, which might and must be conserved amidst the rapid modernization. She states:

> DIVEDCO proposed transforming rural communities in a dual, contradictory movement, wanting and not wanting them to modernize, meticulously selecting what might be changed while expressing a longing for it to remain the same. The peasantry became lo puertorriqueno: identified as what was essentially Puerto Rican in the face of a modernization process that, though managed and encouraged by Puerto Ricans, inevitably promoted the imitation of U.S. patterns of mass production and consumption.

Along this lines, the DIVEDCO produced an estimated one hundred plus films--including feature-length and short films--and La Noche de Don Manuel was not only one of them, it was also the first representation of the Puerto Rican soldier in film.

La Noche de Don Manuel: When the Jíbaro Soldier reaches Suburbia

In *La noche de Don Manuel* [Don Manuel's night], a barrio leader fights against the coming of new community leaders. Fearing he will lose his authority, Don Manuel decides to face the newcomers. And it is at this point that our soldier, Juan, a Korea veteran, comes into the plot. Coming back from the war, has acquired a popular following. Juan is portrayed as a formal and educated man, dedicated to the communities' children and youths. He is the leader of a recreation club, dedicated to developing arts, sports, and reading in children and teens.

Don Manuel takes the club to be a threat to his power. While talking to another community member, Juan is described as "different". From the script, on can deduce this

"difference" is due to "rare ideas he brought from the war." When Juan and Don Manuel talk, the veteran shares his ideas for the community, yet don Manuel believes his ideas are communist. Juan answers by saying that he is not a communist, but an idealist, in tune with the idealist narrative promoted by DIVEDCO.

If one analyzes Juan's discourse, the veteran clearly represents DIVEDCO's ideals. A man who, after the violent though internationalizing process of the war, decides to return to his community to serve not only as an educator, but also as an advocate for democracy. The veteran here becomes a mediator between the closed-minded, patronizing leaders of old and the new breed of younger leaders who seek to take part in community decisions. The social dynamic points to war experience as a process of modernizing the outlook of the *jíbaro* soldier, which is integrated into the smaller modernizations projects shaping Puerto Rican everydayness. Nevertheless, this vision of the war veteran was limited to doctrinarian film, designed for a local, rural audience. Such propaganda, according to Álvarez-Curbelo (1997), was too close to the situation faced by underdeveloped peoples. For this reason, these films never moved beyond the countryside and in urban, more educated spaces, American and Mexican film dominated the film market.

After a long hiatus during which the Puerto Rican film industry was content to be a minor player in the country, the industry became more transnational regarding production, financing, and narrative structures in the 80s. "The need for narrative, production, and financing structures which would allow film products in the world market has been one of the most decisive phenomena within contemporary cultural industries" (Álvarez-Curbelo 1997, P. 81, my translation). Within the new more globally sophisticated film forms, one war film stands out: *Héores de otra patria*, a film on Puerto Rican participation in Vietnam.

Heroes de Otra Patria

The American Invasion centenary in 1998 coincided with the release of *Héroes de Otra Patria* (1998).[30] In these circumstances, the film transcended the merely celebratory or nationalistic, and attempted to show the real collateral effects of a military tradition so linked to U.S. military service. The very title underlines the ambiguity of the Puerto Rican position: "heroes from another homeland." Puerto Ricans serve in a war in which was decided by a President that they, as second-class citizens, did not vote for. Paradoxical and ironic, the title reminds us of a war in which soldiers returned not as heroes, but as antiheroes. Dittmaur and Michaud (1990) add:

> Vietnam War Veterans most of whom were drawn from the America working class, returned from battle not to the parades, speeches and celebrations that had characterized World War II but to a society that for complex reasons often regarded them either contemptuously or indifferently. Being a veteran was not something to be proud of, as it had been historically. Rather, it was something to forget or hide (p. 7).

This is in part because the Vietnam War leaves "a legacy of lies, errors, and impotence. A legacy of futile sacrifice and glaring inequalities, of ideals coming up short against reality" (Dittmaur & Michaud, 1990, p. 6). [The Vietnam War, was especially difficult in as much as, unlike WWII or Korea, it was not a response to aggression, but instead an attempt to direct a nation away from the revolutionary dynamic that was involved in its struggle for independence – in short, the war was arguably one of American aggression. And, perceived as such, it created enormous conflict within the U.S., which naturally extended to the force fighting the war and the massive violence they inflicted on the Vietnamese people and countryside. I affirm the unpopularity when during my collaboration in *Voces: US Latino and Latina Oral History Project*, I interviewed dozens

of Puerto Rican Vietnam veterans who claimed that they had been met, upon returning, with insults and even violence.

It may be that one of the drivers of the unpopularity of the war was the fact that it was covered so closely by a relatively independent media. The brutality of the war was very open, and provided a repertoire of stories and footage that provided filmmakers with a vast inventory of narratives that could be exploited to tell the story of the war. Hollywood did not, however, pay attention to Puerto Rico. The Island's veterans waited almost three decades to see a filmic narration of at least part of their war.

The movie has the ambition to tell something about the 48,000 Puerto Rican men and women, not counting those enlisted in the mainland, who saw action in Vietnam. The ninety-minute film was inspired by a seventeen minute long film by screenwriter and director Iván Dariel Ortiz. According to the press, Ortiz was inspired by his hearing, from childhood on, anecdotes and accounts by former soldiers and family members; which he supplemented by his research in history and sociology.

As in most Vietnam War films, *Heroes de Otra Patria* starts out by "plac[ing itself] squarely at ground level, focusing on the situation of men in combat" (Dittmar & Michaud, 1990, p. 6). The movie takes us through Vietnam jungles--filmed in the island due to similar climate and flora--for most of the running time. However, the certain episodes in the film turn to the home front (Puerto Rico) to show the audience the double war – the war about the war emerging in Puerto Rico and the war overseas. The impacts at home include the dissolutions of families, financial problems, government bureaucracy that gets in the way of aiding the veteran, etc. There is also a dialectical transcontact and intercontact zones which unravel physical and ideological wars, which are evident in the film--Manichaean ideas based on how Puerto Ricans are linked or unlinked to the war.

One of the characters (Raúl), for example, is strongly pro-war and enlists voluntarily, while another, (Carlos) is openly against the war and is drafted. For Carlos (Jimmy Castillo) Vietnam is a war Americans are fighting against their will. He wishes to return home to his family. Raúl (Jorge Castillo) on the other hand, says he wants to go over and fight in Vietnam; he wants to limit "communist aggression" in Vietnam and prevent the domino effect in Southeast Asia.

Both main characters are forced to fight for their lives as Raúl is critically wounded, and Carlos must carry him while looking for help. Lost in the Vietnamese jungle, the characters clash due to their ideological differences. The debate will change Raúl--who ends up hating the war like his mate Carlos. After being found by other American soldiers, the audience discovers that Raúl is actually dead, and has been since he was injured. Carlos has been suffering PTSD from the beginning of the film; the symptoms made him hallucinate the entire discussion with this partner. It also suggests that Carlos' debate is internal; he is debating between the two ideals from within.

The ideological dialectic is the film's main thesis, yet questions regarding the U.S.-P.R. relationship are never problematized, which indicates that the movie is comfortable with the assumption of commonwealth status for Puerto Rico. Raúl's death is symbolic of the death of the pro-statehood party, while Carlos' quasi-schizophrenia links independence to mental illness. It is in this sense that the movie's title poses a problem: —the "heroes from another homeland" are from what homeland?

In historian Silvia Álvarez-Curbelo (2008) analysis of the U.S.-Puerto Rican connection, the Puerto Rican soldier thinks of the island as his or her only homeland. She states:

> Patria (homeland, motherland) for a Puerto Rican soldier was without hesitation Puerto Rico. As a cultural and sentimental construct, patria was the

> amalgamation of real and imaginary landscapes, streams, hills and sunsets, of aromas, textures, and flavors that defined home; places of the heart where life, meaning and remembrance were possible[31].

As the movie shows, the patria or homeland is constructed from the dialogue between two sides of the contact zone, and two conclusions from politics of memory, which allows the characters to imagine the homeland within a jungle in a country fighting a civil war concerning their own homeland. These circumstances lead to the construction and deconstruction of the homeland from the several points of view presented in the story. It should be shocking that a film in which the characters are so ideologically marked does not problematize on the link between politics and the military, but the level of deeper questioning - of imperialism, violence, and nationality – is thinned out by the evident commercial aspirations of the film, which tend to a softer political discourse. Press releases on *Héroes de otra patria* show that it did have commercial sponsors and a million dollar budget, which is a large amount in the island's industry. This contrasts with other contemporary productions--more current and with lower budgets--on WoT, who are working in an emerging, yet struggling local, independent film industry.

Iraq within Me and the Language of War

Even though there are cultural and political figures who claim that creating a film industry in Puerto Rico is, for the most part, a delusion, in the past decade, the Puerto Rico Film Corporation (PRFC) has nevertheless been trying to promote the development of a full spectrum Puerto Rican audiovisual industry. PRFC was created in 1999, with the mandate to develop the arts and sciences of the film industry on the island, in addition to offering incentives to off-island producers to bring movie productions to the Island. [32] Under the leadership of Mariella Pérez, the PRFC has focused on selling the island as a potential cinematic center by using local government incentives to attract those off-island

movie producers in search of, for instance, the tropical settings that Puerto Rico offers in abundance, or the colonial ambiance of Old San Juan. The project has succeeded in bringing in some production: for instance, the film The Men Who Stared at Goats (2009), which revolves around the WOT, used Bayamón as shooting scenery for sequences taking place in Iraq. [33] Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory, so film units may travel the island without having to bother with transnational paperwork. The main goal, however, is to bring entire productions to Puerto Rico, rather that filming parts of movies in the island.

The circumstances are propitious, then, for a new breed of Puerto Rican filmmakers to produce independent local film. As the price of audio-visual equipment has fallen with the rise of the interactive digital technologies, relatively sophisticated video can be produced on tight budgets. The resulting film and video emphasizes narrative over special effects, real locations over artificially built sets, and lesser known actors over celebrities. Similarly, the new breed is working on marginalized topics that have previously been avoided due to political controversy. The new industry does not depend, for the most part, on the potential revenue it can generate from its works, but exploits non-profit funding avenues, either being financed by the filmmakers themselves or by local sponsors. *Irak en mí* (2008) [Iraq within me] and *El lenguaje de la guerra* (2007) [the language of war] are good examples of the new wave of local film.

Irak en mí tell the story of two Puerto Rican soldiers, Mario and Leo, who, after returning home from the WoT, live out the consequence of field combat experience in the civilian sphere. For example, Mario, who, along with other soldiers assaulted [and raped?] an Iraqi woman, suffers severe character displacement on his return, and victimizes his own wife with physical abuse. Leo, on the other hand, a pro-independence character who happens to have served the U.S. military, relives being kidnapped and tortures by Iraqi soldiers. The film, then, is an open attack on the WoT, articulated within

the perspectives of veterans who return burdened by the atrocities of the war and demoralized by having served in a war whose purpose, the movie makes clear, was to enrich military contractors. Director and screenwriter, playwright Roberto Ramos Perea says, "soldiers were not sent to free anyone or to bring democracy to Iraqis, and the soldiers realizes that he/she offered their lives to make a few idiots rich."

Irak en mí portrays the Boricua soldier within the harsh circumstances arising from PTSD and the complexity of remaking life after returning from the battlefield. The film touches on controversies--although superficially--at home, work, and above all, when dealing with government bureaucracy in order to get veteran service. The central theme, however, is establishing parallels between the occupations of Puerto Rico and Iraq. Ramos Perea states that "we are closer to them than to the U.S. They are an invaded, occupied nation, just like us." We belong to the invading army, yet find an overwhelming reality which created bonds with the invaded territory" (Ramos Perea, 2008a).

The movie was shot for five thousand dollars, with a cast of unknowns, and with minimal production equipment. As part of the new film wave, the director admits that, thematically, this kind of motion picture cannot be shown on the commercial level. In the director's blog (2008), he points out the following[12]:

> *Iraq en mí* es un esfuerzo de cine independiente puertorriqueño que obviamente no sería subvencionado por su crudo contenido político. Por esta misma razón, es probable que la película no llegue a las grandes pantallas de los centros comerciales, sin embargo, será distribuida en DVD y estrenada en varios centros culturales de Puerto Rico y enviada a festivales de cine digital del exterior[34].

The PRC, the government organisation created under Gov. Rosselló González (1992-200), would not support an antimilitary and anti-imperialist project. Upon writing this

[12] *Iraq en mí* is an effort to create Puerto Rican film with no evident subvention due to the crude political content. For this very reason, it is possible that the film may not reach the main theaters; it will be distributed in DVD and released in a few cultural centers in the island, and also sent to film festivals abroad. (My translation)

chapter, the film had not been distributed in DVD format, nor shown at any commercial theater in Puerto Rico. It was instead presented at cultural centers in the island, as was the case with *El lenguaje de la guerra*.

Directed by Gazir Sued, this is another anti-WoT film. The picture narrates the tale of a young college student who leaves school and his pregnant girlfriend to join the army in order to solve his family's financial problems. Reprogrammed by war propaganda (political, media, religious), once overseas in the Middle East, he becomes a sadistic torturer. Disturbed and maddened by war, he is admitted to a psychiatric ward after attempting suicide. There, the language of war is constructed from memory--symbolic elements and implications which point to a Puerto Rican culture that is not pro-military, but psychologically militarized.

Sued did not find working with a highly critical content difficult. His own experience as an activist against militarization, and as an intellectual on the matter made it possible for him to plot out the script, which absorbed a decade's worth of thought about the war culture. In an interview with Cine Movida, a specialized website, he adds[13]:

> Llevo más de una década trabajando intelectual y políticamente el tema desde escenarios diversos…La experiencia como activista tanto como mi formación intelectual me permiten trabajar fluidamente el tema[35].

The project itself, which took three years to complete, was also kept from the mainstream, yet Sued argues he never intended to narrow his audience. [14]

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[13] I've been working on the subject intellectually and politically for ten years, and from different scenarios... My experience as an activist and my intellectual formation allow me to work on the subject fluently. (My translation)

[14] I have no commercial interests. I doubt that local TV would run it, not because of the violent or crude content--that's all Hollywood is about--but because of political and moralist attitudes, although I do not reject the idea altogether. For now, I have sent it to several international film festivals, and I will organize showings at universities and certain locales. It is also available in DVD, they are handmade copies, but with market quality.

> No tengo pretensiones comerciales. Dudo que la TV local quiera pasarla, no tanto por su crudeza o su violencia, pues Hollywood se caracteriza por eso, sino por cuestiones politiqueros o moralistas, pero todavía no lo descarto por completo. Por ahora la he hechado a correr suerte en varios festivales internacionales de cine y procuraré organizar presentaciones en universidades y diversos locales. También está disponible en DVD, hechas las copias artesanalmente pero con la misma calidad de cualquier película en el mercado.

The distribution of more sophisticated filmmaking equipment and an appreciation of the new venues of distribution available to independent productions has opened the door for director like Sued and Ramos Perea, who have added a cinematic dimension to the ongoing critique of the WoT. An independent creation ambience is also responsible for the films 'crudeness (i.e. constant violence, nudity, etc.). The soldier/veteran representations, however, remain as one-dimensional and formulaic as those found in commercial films. Both films represent them as PTSD victims, as marginal beings left to die, or unable to reinsert themselves into society. In a certain way, they repeat the 70s and 80s narrative of Hollywood Vietnam films.

THE BORINQUENEERS AND THE FUTURE OF SELF-REPRESENTATION

Puerto Ricans are involved in the movement of self-representation in documentary filmmaking that emerged when cheap video equipment first became available on the marketplace. Its availability made video the medium of choice for members of marginalized groups. Lillian Jimenez, in the article "From the Margin to the Center: Puerto Rican Cinema in New York" (Jimenez, 1993) discusses how Puerto Ricans documentarians want "to expose the terrible conditions under which … this generation had been raised; she challenges the assumption under which these conditions thrived; and re-creates the institutions and society that had engendered them."[36] She argues that the earliest wave of Puerto Rican filmmaking concentrated in the

documentary film because of its relative low cost, accessibility and efficacy in telling a story. Frances-Negrón (1993) analyzed the trends in Puerto Rican women film/video production as follows:

> First, in the U.S.-focused work, there's a tendency to treat issues of immediate concern and to adopt textual strategies towards the transformation of behavior and self-empowerment. Second, the Island-focused production reveals a "compulsion to history," a need to investigate the colonial "origins" of particular issues. Third, a woman-centered narrative and experimental production has various emphases on voice and on representing women's "unconscious" processes and subjectivities[37]

Documentaries like *Manos A La Obra* (Operation Bootstrap) (1983) and *La Operacion* (1982) reveal the "compulsion to history" that Negron-Muntaner refers to. These documentaries explore the conditions in which Puerto Ricans show an interface with subjects, such as imperialism, modernization projects, and citizenship issues.

For example, in the documentary *Manos A La Obra*(1983), Susan Zeig chronicles the origins and impact of the U.S./Puerto Rican industrialization model called Operation Bootstrap. This highly vaunted economic development plan, undertaken in the 1950s, was used to provide a role model for economic development throughout Latin America. In a similar line, film director, Ana María García (Cuban born-Puerto Rican raised) raises issues of reproduction, population control and women in Puerto Rico in the documentary *La Operacion* (1983). García focuses particularly on the massive sterilization campaign that was undertaken by U.S. government order in in Puerto Rico. In 1986, Zidnia Nazario's *La Batalla de Vieques* [the battle of Vieques] critically explores the consequences of the increased militarization on the small island of Vieques, off the east coast of Puerto Rico.

These eighties films presaged the possibility of commentary on Puerto Rican military history and its entanglement in the American imperial mission. In the

documentary *Yo soy Boricua, pa' que tu lo sepas* [I am Boricua, just to let you know] (2007), actor Rosie Perez brings to the small screen a multilayered Puerto Rican identity. In the hour-and-a-half film, Perez uses storytelling techniques to tie together complex histories of colonialism, imperialism, class, and race. The visual intersectionality of these categories is what ultimately configures the poetics of representations about Puerto Rican identity. The representation of Puerto Rican identity as hybrid and translocal, but with a strong sense of peoplehood among Puerto Ricans is what Perez captured in the film. She makes a reference to *The Borinqueneeers*, alluding to the 65th Infantry Regiment, a unit solely composed of Puerto Ricans privates which served in Korea (1950-1953), under a mostly American officer corps. The name comes from the *Taino* word "Borinquen," or "land of the mighty god", the native name for the island prior to European conquest. In this scenario, Puerto Rican filmmaker Noemi Figueroa made her appearance with a documentary about the regiment.

The documentary *The Borinqueneers* (2007) pierced the veil of invisibility that had previously shrouded the Puerto Rican military presence in the mass media. It presents the untold story of the 65th Infantry Regiment. Narrated by Puerto Rican-born actor Hector Elizondo,[38] the film juxtaposes documentary archival footage and interviews of veterans, military officials, and historians. In the highly emotional interviews, the veterans describe in vivid detail the experience of fighting in a segregated unit. The documentary chronicles how Puerto Ricans, as part of the U.S. Armed Forces, were suddenly landed in a double foreign landscape, culture and language – Korean and American - that responded to them with prejudice and discrimination. Some privates barely understood English, which made communication with other units even harder. But in spite of the racial prejudice and the segregation of their battalion, they forged internal

bonds not only via language, but also via cultural identity. This sense of unity and community was vital for fighting in a war that seemed foreign to them.

The motion picture captures the story of service members caught between the obligation to fulfill their military duties and the instinct to survive in harsh combat conditions. In October 1952, the regiment faced one of the toughest missions ever to fall to an American fighting force when several companies were sent into an extremely dangerous sector, regarded as a suicide post. Following a massive mortar bombardment, several dozen soldiers abandoned the regiment. As a result, more than 90 soldiers were sent up on charges, in one of the largest court-martials of the Korean War. Consequently, Puerto Ricans were incorporated in non-segregated American units, changing the face of the military until today.

But most importantly, the documentary shows for the first time how these soldiers struggled between two different national identities, which produced two different reactions—a robust feeling of alliance to the U.S. and a strong antimilitaristic feeling with a strong sense of Puerto Rican identity. Alvarez-Curbelo adds:

> Los puertorriqueños manifiestan un abigarramiento simbólico más complejo….en la experiencia militar de los puertorriqueños,… cohabitan en relación inestable dos patriotismos, resistencias y fidelidades, idiosincrasias y mentalidades locales con imaginarios de democracia y el "American Way of Life".[15]

Figueroa Soulet understands that self-representation is the way to re-inscribe the marginal self into history and challenge its invisibility. When the New York Times asked for her opinion on the Ken Burns issue, she was quoted as saying that she understands why people were upset with Ken Burns. However, she argues:

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[15] Puerto Ricans express a more cpmplex, symbollic multiplicity… In Puerto Rican military experience… two patriotisms, resistences, fidelities, idiosyncracies and local mentalities coexist with the imaginaries of democracy and the American Way of Life.

> Why should we be begging Ken Burns for a few minutes in his series? We have other guys we can cover ourselves. I really felt there was enough there to tell our story in a full program (Gonzalez, 2007).

The documentary aired on September of 2007, the same month when the highly controversial PBS production, Ken Burn's The War, premiered on national television, and also on a date designated by the station as "Hispanic Heritage Month."[39] This designation was fundamental in recognizing the "the multi-generational richness of the Latino community and reveal[ing] the enduring strength of family in America today."[40] Documentaries, short films, and special editions of original programming with a Latino approach were aired for a month. The goal was to "examine the rich history, cultural contributions, and fascinating heritage of Latinos in the U.S. and in Latin America." Within this objective, *The Borinqueneers* found a spot among the programming offered by PBS. An article in USA Today made an interesting connection between the premiere of *The Borinqueneers* on PBS and the controversy with Ken Burn's The War:

> Call it a guilt trip or a cultural awakening, but some Latino filmmakers feel that the controversy over Ken Burns' upcoming World War II documentary has unexpectedly opened doors for their work at PBS (AP, 2007).

Whether remorse, a public relation strategy, or pure coincidence was at work, the airing of this documentary did fill a gap left by the exclusion of Puerto Rican soldiers from The War, aired only weeks before. Furthermore, the film brings to TV in a compact scope a fragment of the untold history of Puerto Rican soldiers. By airing *The Borinqueneers*, Figueroa Soulet adds new faces to the Boricua Soldier's limited repertoire. This time, it's the veterans of the forgotten battalion that fought in Korea,[41] denied recognition for decades and finally accorded it by Figueroa-Soulet.

Self-representation as a style of making the invisible visible in the popular consciousness is a strategy that was forged in the identity aesthetics of the eighties, and that has a continuing viability in the struggle to depict the Puerto Rican subject in film

and television without marginalizing or eclipsing him or her. Figueroa-Soulet's film not only filled a gap, but seemed to point to a future of rediscovering the complex history of Puerto Rico's servicemen.

THE MIRACLE

As I was writing this chapter, I was also contributing to the VOCES Oral History Project. As a research assistant to the project, part of my responsibility was to conduct interviews with several focus groups that explored the experiences of Latino veterans who served from Korea and Vietnam generations. During one of the focus groups, we inquired about what was the one thing that they recall the most upon their arrival Korea. Out of all the cultural, geographical and/or war related experiences, a Mexican-American soldier said: "The thing that impress me the most upon my arrival was to see black guys talking in Spanish". The black guy he was referring to was a Puerto Rican soldier who served with him during Korea.

This commentary led me to think that if the Puerto Rican soldier had been mostly written out of history, the black Puerto Rican soldier was in an even worse state. Besides one secondary character in the TV drama series, *Las guerreras* (the father of one of the main characters who happened to be a veteran), there are no Afro Puerto Rican characters. One can argue that the character of El Veterano, and his interpreter, Juan Manuel, in the racial categories of Puerto Rico, would be coded as a *jabao* –a light skin person who has features associated to black people-. Obviously, as I would come to see, I was not the only person who had noticed this fact.

In 2008, during the middle of the WoT, and one year after the Ken Burn's controversy, Spike Lee's added the first image of an Afro Puerto Rican soldier in the

mass media to his film *Miracle at St. Anna*. The movie narrates an account of black American soldiers whose contributions to WWII were overlooked by history. It is also a critique of the all-white fraternities of films like *Saving Private Ryan*, *Flags from Our Fathers* and *Letters of Iwo Jima*. The film, a historical fiction based on the novel by James McBride (who wrote the screenplay), tell the story of four members of the 92nd Infantry Buffalo Soldiers caught behind enemy lines in a small village in Tuscany during WWII. Among the four, there is Hector Negron (interpreted by Laz Alonso), a second-generation Afro Puerto Rican soldier from New York who speaks Spanish, English and Italian. His character is crucial to the development of the film and to the success of the Buffalo Soldier's mission. It is not my intention to offer a detailed reading of the film. For logistics reason I will have to include this representation in future revisions of my work. However, the reason I wanted to bring it into consideration is to demonstrate that multi-layered, and complex and progressive representations of the Puerto Rican soldiers are possible. However, the cultural history of representations reveals interesting insights into perspective.

Throughout this chapter, I have tried to show that the Puerto Rican soldier/veteran's stock of images in the Island's own television and film culture is quite limited, and can even be counted on one hand. In television, all Puerto Rican soldier/veteran representations originate in the predigital era--three of them (Manteca, Dominguez, and El veterano) emerged in the so-called golden age of Puerto Rican television. This golden age comprises thirty years of television programming, in which local productions, such as telenovelas, sitcoms, variety shows, musicals, and game shows occupied primetime programming in local channels (WAPA, WKAQ-TV, WKBM-TV, and WLUZ-TV). Nevertheless, as cable hit and the television networks lost their hold on the mass audience, television changed, limiting local production.

Davila (1998) points out that "Since the 1980s local programming has also been affected by the popularization of the cable industry, which has developed in mostly commercial terms and is dominated by American network programming" (p. 455). It is here where television in the island "became part of U.S. national and multinational conglomerates and the production of local programming has gradually decreased" (Rivero, 2005, p. 9). In 2000, local channels began to be gobbled up by U.S. Latino networks like Univisión and Telemundo (NBC), which negatively affected local production. In 2010, canned programming (mostly talk shows) from Univisión, Telemundo, and the like grew from 40 to 80% (Guzmán, 2010).

Despite this, and even though most images like Manteca, Dominguez, and El veterano originated in the golden age, Dominguez and El veterano did survive the local industry decline and appeared sporadically in local programs, perhaps due to the fact that comedy is a low-cost genre. Furthermore, the fact that many characters appeared sporadically and not periodically allows them to adapt to intervening in any type of program. As comedy characters, constantly shaped throughout the years, they can be included in programming without elaborate introduction.

In contemporary productions like *Las guerreras*, the image of Puerto Ricans that briefly appeared was made possible by the public policy of the government, which assigned one million dollar each year for telenovelas, miniseries, and specials. Although *Las guerreras* presented one of the most progressive Puerto Rican soldier/veteran representations, it was a one-time deal, and was not aired more than once.

The richness of such representations is a variable determined by the place they occupy in the televisual landscape. For example, in television, the most prominent ones--popular and long running--belong to comedy in Puerto Rico. According to Davila (1998):

> Puerto Rican television attains heightened significance; local programming provides an important venue for the dissemination of Puerto Rican culture, humor, and mannerisms in a colonial context where any display of local culture constitutes an important locus for political debate and national definition. In fact, many television comedians and artists have achieved great prominence in Puerto Rican society as legislators, senators, and cultural heroes (p. 454-55).

Rivero (2005) agrees with this notion when he points out that "Puerto Rico's locally produced shows have in fact created various sites for discussion of social, cultural, and political issues" (p. 5). From this point of view, characters like Manteca, Dominguez, and El veterano speak--from their own points of view--about possible types of Puerto Ricanness, thus configuring their ideas from their own military experience. It does not matter if they are pro or antimilitary: veteran characters carry the wounds of war back to the civilian zone. They are the ambassadors of another contact zone, and are, in a sense, marked by that experience as slightly 'strange". Whereas a character like Manteca, who is evidently inspired by the U.S. mainstream character of Gomer Pyle, shows that "the cultural influences have been more prevalent in relation to television genres and program ideas and concepts" (Rivero, 2005, p. 8).

In film, however, Puerto Rican soldier/veteran representations are more diverse. In contrast to TV, where most representations stem from the Vietnam War, film tell us stories about veterans from Korea, Vietnam, and the WoT. Also contrary to television, comedy is not the preferred genre. Rather, film presents characters in social dramas where their human conflicts originate in their own military experience. Nevertheless, film is more explicit when it comes to portraying collateral damage. Except DIVEDCO's project, *La noche de Don Manuel*, where the indoctrinated character distances himself from antimilitary ideas, other films like *Héroes de otra patria*, *Iraq en mí* and *El lenguaje de la guerra* show the crudeness of war, not only from the battlefield, but also at home, by using PTSD as a common trope.

Another avenue for recuperating the history of veterans is taken by female documentarians in the tradition of personal films, or specifically identity-based films, such as Noemí Figueroa-Soulet. They created historically enriched scenarios that recovery the experience of Puerto Rican soldiers outside of the lines drawn by the dominant view of the military in Hollywood and U.S. commercial media. They rewrite – or rather, write - their histories. In order for some of these self-representations to work, however, exceptional circumstances are needed so that the projects may have a wider distribution. In Figueroa-Soulet's case, the controversy surrounding Ken Burns gave her a chance to pierce the usual veil of mass media indifference. Given the affirmation of the self-representation aesthetic in these wider venues, I will next turn to such depictions in digital/social media generated over the course of the WoT. In the next chapter, I will analyze how social networking sites (SNSs) like MySpace and Facebook serve as self-representation platforms for portraying a Puerto Rican soldier broadcasting from the battlefield itself.

Chapter II: Heroes from Another Online Land: The Boricua Soldier in Social Networking Sites

I must have been about ten years old when I stood there with the rest of my fourth grade class in the middle of the patio, staring at an enormous oak tree that was decorated with dozens of yellow ribbons hung from its irregular branches, their color already faded by the hot, Puerto Rican sun, with names written on them in green glitter: the "Tree of Hope". The names were those of the men and women who had been sent to the Persian Gulf to serve in Operation Desert Storm. We prayed underneath this tree, which was permitted in 1991, or at least it did happen at the Anselmo Villarubia Public School, where we were gathered in our hundreds from the first to the sixth grade. We prayed for the invisible soldiers on our side of the first war ever broadcast "live," from Kuwait. I say "invisible" because in Puerto Rico, there was barely any information on these soldiers on broadcast United States (U.S) mainstream media. There were approximately 10,000 National Guard troops from Puerto Rico serving in the war[42] but there were no "embedded" Puerto Rican TV reporters to tell us about them. Apart from the images, captured by the local television news, of their departure and –if they were fortunate — their return, the visibility of these subjects was minimal.

Twenty years later, the oak tree at my old school has long been chopped down. Thus, there are no yellow ribbons for the Puerto Ricans serving in America's second war in Iraq hanging on it. At the beginning of that war, Puerto Rico committed half of its National Guard – 4,195 Army Guard soldiers and 690 Air Guard personnel[43]. By this time, some of the children who prayed for the soldiers whose lives were engraved on the yellow ribbons had themselves become soldiers, going off to serve in the various War(s) on Terror (WOT) in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, these soldiers experienced duty

while maintaining real time connections to Puerto Rico that would have amazed the soldiers of 1991. The Internet, which was on the horizon during the first Gulf War, and the growth of social networking sites (SNS) and user generated content sites (UGC) during the 2000s, such as MySpace, Facebook and YouTube, have brought the soldiers within the (deceptive) range of peer-to-peer immediacy. Soldiers and the homefront (friends, family, lovers, and an array of those seeking, for commercial or other reasons, to establish contact on the Internet) have thus been brought together as never before. However, my focus as a researcher is not to celebrate the triumphal march of contemporary technology, but to explore the tensions between 'roots and routes' (Gilroy, 1992) which is enacted in the rhizomatic form of networks online populated by the flow generated from the deployment and re-deployments of Puerto Rican soldiers in and out the 'war zone' as another of the kinds of 'contact zones' (Pratt, 1992) that have been an endemic feature of the Puerto Rican diaspora. A war created contact zone comes in two forms, populated by two styles of representation: a) trans-contact zone; and b) intra-contact zone. A trans-contact zone refers to the self-representations which occur in a non-war space (home, military bases, etc.), either before deployment or after deployment (in fashions of the politics of memory). Conversely, an intra-contact zone refers to those self-representations that are directly embedded in the battlefield. Within this framework, I aim to explore these alternative spaces where what is busy being forgotten (by mainland culture) is actually being remembered, where the non-accounted-for stories of Puerto Rican soldiers are being produced, stored, and circulated.

My target sources for surveying the self-representation of Puerto Rican soldiers in SNS are MySpace and Facebook, the largest and most accessible social network sites. When the Puerto Rican National Guard embarked for Kuwait in April of 2003, neither site existed. But soon after, MySpace went on-line (in August 2003), signaling the advent

of one of the most popular innovations of the 00 era Web: social networking sites. By coincidence, the emergence of social networking sites and the unfolding of the long violent occupation of Iraq happened at the same time. The former effected the latter in that it dramatically changed the scope and style of the interaction between soldiers in the war zone and all those 'back home'. In so doing, these soldiers (along with millions of civilians) rapidly learned new ways to self-represent.

By "self-representation" I mean the use of language codes such as texts, photographs, video and sound, to articulate a digital image of the soldier's self, and to tell their digital stories in these Web 2.0 enabled spaces. The Web 2.0 brings individuals to the forefront of the creative processes by giving users to generate their own on-line content and share it with communities more or less of their choosing. As danah boyd (2007b) claims, in reference to the SNS of MySpace, a "profile can be seen as a form of digital body where individuals must write themselves into being…express salient aspects of their identity for others to see and interpret" (p. 13). While these individuals presumably intended to construct their profiles for their friends and peers to view, the latter term has assumed a radical expansion in the SNS world. The attraction of MySpace is that it allowed users to have a free structure that they could vary in a number of ways and present, theoretically, to any one on the planet with access to the Internet. Of course, that access can be cut in a number of ways. The profile can be limited, due to user selected privacy defaults, to filter out random viewing. But the fact that the MySpace user can create a potentially universally accessible site for free has a special significance for the soldier. As the U.S. Army was quick to note, it means, for one thing, that it is harder to control the flow of intelligence to enemies, as well as to the public – including the news agencies - at large[44]. Another dimension effected by the SNS is that, with the articulation of these digital bodies, the soldier assumes shifting subject positions,

entailing a politics of visibility at both the technological infrastructural level and a personal level (Mallan, 2009). For these reasons, I will introduce into the present chapter a brief discussion on the access and presence of the Internet in the military. I will begin with military personnel's insertion into the blogosphere with the creation of the Miliblogs, and, eventually, the popularization of SNS.

Next I will analyze the observations I have made over four years of participant observer experience, informed by the methods of online ethnography and textual and critical discourse analysis (CDA) of the SNS. I applied to my observations three distinct but interrelated theoretical approaches: 1) articulation (Hall, Morley, & Chen, 1996); 2) digital racial formations (Nakamura, 2008); and 3) colonial/racial subjectivities (Grosfoguel, 2003). My goal was to observe the way in which the soldiers in this study articulate their ethnonational identities. But as that ethnonational identity is imbricated with gender, class, sexuality and cultural nationalism, I also wanted to suggest an interpretation of the interplay of each factor in a very special, and very stressful transnational context (involving, among other things, one nation in the process of civil war (Iraq) and one commonwealth that is neither a state nor a separate nation (Puerto Rico)). My goal was to understand how particular articulations of the Puerto Rican ethnonational identity online are inflected by these broader factors.

DIGITIZING THE BATTLEFIELD: INTERNET IN THE U.S. MILITARY

Since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. military has undergone a 'revolution' in the command and control system it uses to maintain global military dominance through the integration of digital technology. (LaFace, 2001) The U.S. Army demonstrated its overwhelming ability to dominate the full spectrum of the warzone during Desert Storm;

in the aftermath, the military began what was known as the digitization initiative to build on this asymmetrical advantage. The main point of digitization is that it enables the commander of a given unit, who may be located at any point on the globe, to visualize, describe and direct tactical operations in real time, speeding up the upload and download of information. To this end, the military devised techno-communication modules to acquire, exchange, and employ timely digital information (audio, video, text, image graph) throughout the battle space.

The claim made for digitization on the battlefield was that it would increase the Army's survivability, lethality, and tempo of operations. By 1996, all of the U.S. Air Force commanders had e-mail. As the American military moved into action in the Balkans, several cyber cafes were created. Since then, the military and private organizations have spent billions of dollars in 'wiring'[45] the war zones. One of the first Pentagon initiatives in this direction, which began on Dec. 1, 1995, was BosniaLink, a homepage on which end users could follow the U.S. military's deployment on the Internet. [46]. Many of the 20,000 U.S. soldiers serving in Bosnia-Herzegovina started receiving electronic messages from their families and friends.

This real-time link had a startling effect on this generation of service men and women. Previous generations had limited access to occasional and expensive long distance phone calls, but the Internet provided an entirely different end-user experience. It seemed to lessen the pain caused by long separations by allowing the soldier to stay in touch with loved ones daily. In contrast with previous conflicts, family and friends of soldiers deployed to the WOT don't have to rely on regular mail to bring them letters days or weeks after they have been sent to the war zone, but instead can use e-mails (which allow the attachment of digital photos) for quick same-day, or even same-hour response. According to press reports, the most popular spot in the military camps is the

Internet café, where the deployed stand in long lines and wait an average of half an hour to gain access to a largely improvised space, equipped with around fifty computers, some of them with Web cameras (Davenport, 2005). The cafes are a testimony to how far the Internet has moved from emailing, with the tools for creating Internet spaces – blogging sites, photo sites, social network sites and numerous video downloading sites – making it possible for the ordinary deployed soldier to make him or herself visible on the Net in a variety of ways. As social networks have grown up in parallel to WOT, soldiers flocked to the blogosphere, and to video sharing sites and social networking sites, generating controversies within the military concerning the degree of control the Pentagon would cede to the soldier, and controversies outside the military due to the content uploaded at certain times and in certain places by certain soldiers.

Known as "mili-blogs," blogging by deployed soldiers soon became an ideal space for representing the experience of war and the opinions of the rank and file with an immediacy that neither the official military press office nor the media can compete with. Mark Memmott (2005) succinctly evokes the changes the Internet has wrought in a striking image at the center of his article, 'Militbloggers are typing their place in history':

> Imagine some of the soldiers who survived the Battle of Gettysburg stopping the next day to write their dramatic tales -- and people around the world instantly reading them. If that battle had been fought today, no imagination would be necessary (USA Today, p. 13A).

Indeed, by shrinking the time lag between the experience of the combat zone and its representation, the Internet has created a certain reflexivity in the combat zone in the lives of the soldiers, who now respond not only to events as they unroll, but also to the representation of these events by their fellow soldiers. A feedback in other domains – less immediately practical and more affective - develops with the soldier's audience, which can consist of family, friends, and supporters; and can also include critics or even people

with quite hostile agendas. The soldiers offered –and some of them still offer- more than accounts of the war, they also offered images from the battlefield not seen on traditional media, which were easy to distribute given the interconnectivity of new media technologies such as digital cameras, web cams and cell phones, and almost impossible to block once they existed on the internet. Incidentally, American soldiers were not the only users of such equipment – it was also used to some purpose by Iraqi insurgents. Thus, the access and use of these technological gadgets during the WOT quickly became an integral part of the war, leading scholars to conclude that this conflict was America's first global Internet war (Weidman, 2003). Others like Barb Palser (2003) even claim that the WOT and the Internet are structurally intertwined – the latter conditions the possibility of the former. It is in this context that Memmott, in his USA Today article, justified his conclusions: the combat zone has been transformed in a historically significant way by the fact that anyone with access to the Internet can read first-hand accounts of life in a war zone in real-time, or see images and video shot in the war zone that would previously have been shot and controlled mostly by the dominant military power in the zone.

The potential loss of information control has not gone unnoticed or undebated by the Pentagon. When Afghanistan was invaded in 2001, the Pentagon has "no specific guidelines on blogging per se…they [personnel] can do it if they are writing their blogs not on government time and not on a government computer unless they reveal classified information, and then it becomes an issue as a security violation"[47] (Simon, 2004). In fact, up to the time that the military started seriously censoring the miliblogs, in 2007, they had also been providing soldiers with Internet access. So what in the military experience of the blogs changed the Pentagon's rules?

In 2005 the Pentagon created the Army Web Risk Assessment Cell AWRAC in response to the fact that some soldiers were posting sensitive information to Internet

websites and blogs. Originally formed in 2002 to police official Defense Department websites (.mil), the Army Web Risk Assessment Cell, or AWRAC, expanded its mission in 2005. A handful of military bloggers, including Spec. Colby Buzzell, were accused of providing too many details of firefights in Iraq. Buzzell, for one, was banned from patrols and confined to base after one such incident, and AWRAC began looking for others like him on blogs and .com sites"[48].

Taking their cue from AWRAC concerns, military officials began to shut down several miliblogs starting in 2005, arguing that they reveal sensitive information. Soldiers were penalized in some cases for the behavior[49] presented on their blogs. However, an internal audit by AWRAC in 2007 found less violations of operation procedures security committed by military bloggers than by the Pentagon's own public relations and communications department. This spoke to an underlying tension in the Pentagon's action: the fear of losing control of the public relations aspect of the war. In 2005 there were already rumbles of discontent in the U.S. about the continuing military presence in Iraq and Afghanistan. The debate was fed by the proliferation of miliblogs, which, in 2005, increased over the year from two hundred to nearly a thousand. Yet, to protect their identities, many of the bloggers operated under pseudonyms, taking over a common procedure among civilian bloggers as well. Others had their family members write blogs about their experiences.

Blogs were one important aspect of the new sphere of self-representation made possible by the influx of innovative Internet tools. The SNS were especially popular with soldiers, who, for one thing, came from the young demographic that identified with the Internet, and, for another thing, were in the traditional position of soldiers in a warzone: experiencing stretches of dead time interspersed with stretches of critical and hazardous time. . Still, even given time and opportunity, there are also other reasons, particular to

the situation of these soldiers (volunteers fighting in a controversial war) that must be uncovered to fully tell the story of why these soldiers were so attracted to these platforms. Especially when the soldiers come from a colonial space that is characteristically occluded in the mainstream media.

The U.S. Army Social Media Division was founded in January of 2009 with the objective of managing the official U.S. Army social networking sites for Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flicker, Vimeo, iReport, NowPublic, and Delicious. According to their website, the division is dedicated to "telling the Soldiers' story, and in return promoting those stories to an external audience on social networking sites"[50]. To fulfill this goal, the Division encourages their constituency (of defense personnel) to submit their officially recognized U.S. Army organizational, social media page(s) to be included in their index. At the moment, their index lists more than a thousand websites. Among them are military bases, infantry divisions, recruiting stations, and even food divisions. Yet, as is evident from the lateness of the date for creating such a basically simple weblist, the DoD has been behind in curve in responding to the new theater of social media, and spent more time in the 00s trying to suppress it than co-opt it. The truth is that the relationship between social media websites and the military has been very contentious.

The Pentagon policy of allowing deployed service members to stay in touch with their relatives and friends on the home front has always been subject to the over-riding concern of keeping control over a hierarchically organized fighting force always threatened with problems with morale. Institutional memories of the near collapse of morale in Vietnam have motivated almost all military reforms over the last thirty years. Given the institutional memory of Vietnam, the occupation of Iraq seemed alarmingly parallel in several ways – like Vietnam, Iraq "was a non-linear process composed of

constant but isolated battles to take one minor objective after another…" (Lair, 2011)– such being the nature of low intensity guerilla war. Thus, the facilitation of contact through the connectivity of the Web presented the DoD with an ambiguous tool, which, on the one hand, fell squarely within the morale building via consumer goods pioneered in the Vietnam war, but that also presented the possibility of the uncontrolled flow of information from a theater of conflict from which the DoD had essentially restrained the press by embedding them. From the DoD viewpoint, the multiplication of personal 'news reports" from the front could lead to problems: tactical, political, and morale-centered. The SNS existed to provide a service that allowed members to build their own sites – such was their lure and competitive advantage. But all highly hierarchical institutions – from corporations to classrooms to the army – found that this leveling of the information field could lead to problems. The interests of the DoD was not aligned, to a comfortable degree, with that of the grunt in the field, broadcasting his or her own video and photographs. For that reason, the history of relationships between SNS and the military deserves special attention.

For the purpose of this work I will focus on the top two SNS, MySpace and Facebook. Because the world of SNS is relatively new, my work has to deal with the changing configuration of the SNS as well as their relationship to the military. For instance, when I started this research in 2006, MySpace was by far the most popular SNS, not only among Puerto Rican soldiers, but also among U.S. soldiers in general[51]. Yet fashions in SNS shift, and reveal differences that seem to break down according to different groups. Why are there groups using sites to segregate themselves by nationality, age, educational level, or other factors that typically segment society? How was it that MySpace was preferred by U.S. soldiers in general? danah boyd (2007a) asked this same

question when she explored class division through Facebook and MySpace: She argues that:

> MySpace is still home for Latino/Hispanic teens, immigrant teens, "burnouts," "alternative kids," "art fags," punks, emos, goths, gangstas, queer kids, and other kids who didn't play into the dominant high school popularity paradigm. These are kids whose parents didn't go to college, who are expected to get a job when they finish high school. These are the teens that plan to go into the military immediately after schools[52].

Her essay confirms my own ethnographical experience in 2006, in which MySpace was the primary way soldiers not only communicated with their relatives and friends, but also often communicated their stories to the world.

Given these class characteristics, it is not surprising that the presence of military officials in MySpace's circuits began increasing drastically. In February 2006, the Marine Corps launched its own profile as a recruitment ploy. According to reports from Associated Press (2006), during its first month, the Marine site garnered a total of 170 recruitment prospects, out of 430 requests for information. Other military branches, including the U.S. Air Force, Army, Coast Guard and the Navy, opened MySpace profiles the same year. Similarly, both pro-war and anti-war activists also created profiles for themselves. [53]

Within the Pentagon, the encounter of soldiers with civilians in a communication zone that they had little control over, and that seemed to self-organize unpredictably sphere had long caused concern, with the result that in 2007, the DoD began blocking access on its computers to some of the most popular destinations for social networking - such as MySpace- and other content sharing websites (i.e. YouTube). In April, the Army issued regulation 530-1 to set more restrictive ground rules for interactive Internet use. The Pentagon's concern was not only with the quality of information flow from soldiers, but also about the physical effect of bandwidth use, which, the U.S. Strategic Command

claimed, was taking away military dedicated bandwidth in mission-critical areas. The DoD site policy followed by one month the Army's publication of 530-1. Thus, the protocol was put in place to ban soldier participation in online discussion groups or sending personal e-mail unless a superior officer cleared the content.

However, the treatment of Facebook within the U.S. military took a very different trajectory, seemingly affected by a class difference. The ban in 2007 never affected use of Facebook, which was the SNS favored by officers. Soldiers were on MySpace, and as boyd (2007a) pointed out at the time, "Facebook [was] extremely popular in the military, but it's not the SNS of choice for 18-year old soldiers, a group that is primarily from poorer, less educated communities. They are using MySpace. The officers, many of whom have already received college training, are using Facebook". In fact, three years later, the decline in MySpace as compared to Facebook has still not affected the Puerto Rican demographic, which has become one of the mainstays of MySpace. As I mentioned in the introduction of this work, Facebook began by exploiting the class/race divide, as its business plan involved capitalizing on its prestige as a Harvard-only site. This guided the expansion of the site to high school students in 2005. In these early stages, Facebook explicitly positioned itself against MySpace in terms of class composition. Its exclusivity was part of its appeal, in distinction from other SNS. In this positioning, MySpace was increasingly understood as 'ghetto', because of the supposed races, tastes and class composition of its user demographic.

When Facebook granted access to everybody in September 2006, however, the soldiers started to Facebook and away from MySpace. Its previous policy of exclusivity made Facebook a high-end brand, even though it cost nothing to join. Some soldiers began by opening a Facebook account but remained more active on MySpace; others were active on both platforms; while some simply shut down their MySpace accounts and

moved to Facebook. The move to Facebook was accelerated when MySpace was banned from DoD controlled computers. This growth forced the DoD to start implementing the same recruiting strategy which they had used with MySpace. By 2010, the U.S. Army's Facebook profile had a total of 212,000 fans.

Facebook -and other SNS- were not exempt from the Pentagon's distrust of the Internet. In 2009, the DoD considered a near-total ban of them. The back-story was that SNS make it far too easy for hackers to gain access to the military's networks. This reason is significantly different from concern with battlezone security. However, on February 27, 2010, with DTM 09-026, the DoD made its peace with social media and allowed the use of SNS and other interactive Web 2.0 applications, like Twitter. The new policy directed that the DoD's non-classified network provide configured access to Internet-based capabilities across all Defense components, including the various combat branches. According to Whitney (Whitney, 2010) "The DoD has found that social networking sites increasingly are becoming valuable tools for those in the military to communicate amongst themselves, with other agencies, and with the general public, according to the Air Force". Still, rules in place forbid soldiers, sailors, and airmen from engaging in any activities that would compromise military actions, undercut readiness, or involve access prohibited network sites (gambling, pornography, and hate sites).

It is against this evolving background that U.S. soldiers engaged in creating and maintaining profiles on SNS while in battle zones. In the next section I will explore the self-representation of Puerto Rican soldiers on MySpace. My intent is to answer the question of how soldiers' construct SNS identities as soldiers against their other composite identities, those defined by the dimensions of ethnicity, gender and class. My emphasis will be, of course, on ethnicity. I consider that "ethnicities are defined against lived and imagined experiences as well as against perceived notions of homeland and

cultures" (Noelle-Ignacio, 2005, p. 45). In the case of Puerto Ricans, this idea is complicated by a history that has created a huge diaspora of Puerto Rican immigrants, which has set in motion a complication in the constant negotiation of the self's claim to 'belonging'. Is the group to which Puerto Ricans belong synonymous with a "people," understood as an "ethnicity" (defined by a specific culture across national-state boundaries), or a "nationality" (defined in relationship to a specific territory, with full or partial claims to independent sovereignty), or both? (Negrón-Muntaner, 2004).

Avoiding a naively homogenous view of identity, I will use Stuart Hall's notion of identity as "never unified…increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions" (Hall, 1996, p. 4). My approach to the presence of Puerto Rican soldiers on SNS is sensitive to how their self-representation expresses their ethnonational identity is mediated by their position as second class citizens subject to colonial and racial regimes of subordination. In addition, my study examines the question of whether the constant mobility of the military experience disrupts not only the sense of home, but also that of a homeland.

TOWARDS A TRIANGULATION OF METHODS

According to Markham and Byam (2009) the Internet has experienced at least four major inter-related transformations in its brief career from the early nineties onward: 1) media convergence; 2) mediated identities; 3) redefinitions of social boundaries; and 4) the transcendence of geographical boundaries. The authors claim that each of these intertwined cultural dominant idea have shaped changes in the design and content of the dominant research paradigm in Internet cultural studies. Kendall (2009) suggests that

online research is determined by three different parameters: spatial, temporal, and relational. Spatial boundaries "refer to questions of where, who, and what to study. Temporal boundaries refer to questions of time spent and the issues of beginning and ending research. Relational boundaries refer primarily to the people they study" (p. 22). She argues that these boundaries overlap and blur during the methodological decision process.

While working on this chapter I wrote down a list of specific challenges that emerged as I was adopting a methodological approach. The first concerned the content-sensitivity of my material: as I monitored soldiers' profiles, the content of those profiles was obviously going to be affected by on-line phenomena (the rapid change of social media) and off-line phenomena (the hazards of the battlezone, and the deployment cycle of the soldiers).[54] When I started my research in 2006, Facebook was open to a select audience – and it is now open to a general one. MySpace decreased in popularity, and microblogging sites such as Twitter became popular. The U.S. involvement in the WOT changed its strategy since Obama won the presidency in 2008, bringing about the downsizing of the commitment in Iraq and the surge in troop strength in Afghanistan. Thousands of Puerto Rican soldiers have served more than one tour in either Iraq and/or Afghanistan, and more than three hundred have died (since the moment I started in 2006) in these battle zones.

A second challenge dealt with the identification of the unit of analysis, the Puerto Rican soldier. There is no on-line 'directory' in which this soldier figures – rather, I had to devise a way to search SNS specifically for Puerto Rican soldiers. In this regard, boyd (2009) argues that although there are many different ways to collect quantitative data involving categories such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, etc. none of the categories are exhaustively searchable. In order to find the units of analysis, I had to play

with the search engine options. In the case of MySpace, the 'Advanced' search engine option offered several categories to play with. However, for the purpose of this research, I only used gender, age, ethnicity, and location. The selected criteria were males and females between the ages of 18-45, white, black, and Hispanic. I selected both genders, male and female because more women, and more Puerto Rican women, serve in the military in war zones than ever before, even though Puerto Rican women have served actively since World War II, and not merely as nurses. The selected age range corresponds to the minimum age for enlistment, according to federal law (10 U.S.C., 505), and the maximum age.

However, the choice of ethnicity deserves special attention. The reason for selecting White, Black, and Other is that many Puerto Ricans don't perceive themselves as part of the Latino/Hispanic racial/ethnic category, opting instead for being identified as a Puerto Rican. Officially, the U.S. Census excludes the population on the island of Puerto Rico from their Latino/Hispanic statistics because they are US citizens by birthright but not US residents. Duany (2002) argues that the majority of Puerto Ricans in the diaspora define themselves as Puerto Ricans rather than any other category (i.e. American, Latino/a). But on SNS like MySpace, the menu-driven-identities only give you "white", "black", or "other" in the category of race.

And finally, given the fact that soldier deployments regularly move them from hometowns (either on the island or the mainland), to a training base (i.e. Ft. Hood, Ft. Jackson, etc), to deployment destinations (i.e. Iraq and/or Afghanistan), I needed to select among several locations. This is because in many cases, regardless of their offline location, their online location remained anchored to their physical home address.

For the identification of units I took into account diasporic communities of Puerto Ricans in the continental U.S. For example, the major cities with the largest Puerto Rican

populations in 2000 were New York City, Chicago, Philadelphia, Newark, Providence, and Hartford. I also looked at those with the fastest-growing population of Puerto Ricans, such as Buenaventura Lakes, FL, Poinciana, FL; Orlando, FL; Allentown, PA, Tampa, FL; Reading, PA; and New Britain, CT[55]. A search using these location criteria generated a huge number of profiles from which I selected those who publicly acknowledged being from Puerto Rico. The selection was made through preliminary observation of visual (images, videos, background) and textual references (About Me, General Interests, Group Affiliations) to Puerto Rico or their Puerto Ricanness.

But the search machine on Facebook presented different problems, as Facebook's search engine primarily supports searching for pre-existing social relations, rather than a search for complete strangers (boyd, 2007). This is part of Facebook's attraction: it supposedly allows the user more control over his or her connections. Therefore, their search engines rely on 1) using e-mail accounts (using the person's e-mail account to look for people within their contact list); 2) friends suggestions (friends of friends of your network); 3) search for specific people through their names or e-mail; and 4) through instant messenger contacts. Facebook does, however, have a growing population of group pages, and I decided that my best option was to join four Facebook groups that claimed to be related to Puerto Ricans in the military, and from their, using their members section, I could look for those who were in the military, access those who did not have their private settings on. The groups were: 1) Soldados Puertorriquenos[56]; 2) Boricuas en el Army[57]; 3) Boricuas en Iraq[58]; y 4) Para Nuestros Soldados Boricuas[59].

To systematize my observations, I did an online ethnography of the profiles for two years, taking on the role of participant observer, with a heavy emphasis on observations. In the SNS world, observation can also be labeled "lurking", a term with certain pejorative connotations. I also moved between the online and offline

environments, doing several informal interviews with Puerto Rican soldiers. Of course, the core of my project relies on the interface – for this determines online self-presentation. For this reason, each of the selected profiles from MySpace and Facebook were saved and archived for the purpose of further textual and critical discourse analysis. Having coded the visual, audio, and textual aspects of the profile, I then mapped the interplay between the codes to discover the styles by which they articulated their ethnonational identities.

The importance of doing critical discourse analysis is that online discursive interactions are inherently sites of social interaction, and they must be understood as reflections of a "knowledge base" which is grounded in larger offline social structures, situations, and norms about language and language use. These knowledge bases are sites for the reproduction of other social structures, situations, and norms about language and language use. In this sense, when members of an online community participate in the production of discourse, they negotiate meanings and form new ones to suit their needs, but however improvisational these discourses may seem, they are always anchored in the subjects' cultural context.

THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN THE DIGITIZATION OF PUERTO RICANNESS

When crafting a personal profile on a SNS, the use of text, images, audio, and video are intrinsic to the act of self-representation. boyd (2007b) argues that this process makes explicit the self-reflexivity and self-monitoring that are necessary for identity formation within post-modernity. Profiles are constructed within the constraints imposed by the design of the site, through a series of generic templates in which the choice of photos and the act of filling out forms of generic questions allow individuals to signal

meaningful cues about themselves. But before responding to the question of what Puerto Rican soldiers say about their identity, I must make a detour into how they say it, particularly the language they employ.

As a colonial territory, Puerto Rico has 500-year-old tradition of speaking Spanish. However, the Americanization campaign that began in 1898 and that accompanied the occupation of the island emphasized English. Yet, the campaign to make English the universal second language of Puerto Rico has failed, however often it has been revived. This language barrier is one of the great challenges facing Puerto Rican soldiers, ever since their insertion in the military in 1917. In fact, an Army report that was created decades ago and released in 2001 mentions that "communication problems between largely white, English-speaking officers and Spanish-speaking Puerto Rican enlisted men" were one of the causes of the breakdown of the 65th Infantry during the Korean War (Villahermosa, 2001). With the exception of second and third-generation Puerto Ricans living in the U.S, the majority of islanders who enroll in the military usually experience some difficulties when communicating in English.

The linguistic problem stems from the difference between the official policy of the Commonwealth, which made English and Spanish the official languages of the island in 1993 and promotes the idea that Puerto Rico is a 'bilingual' nation, and the demographic reality, which is more aptly described in the 2000 Census report on language use (Bruno, 2003) that states that only 14.4% of the population in Puerto Rico speaks English at home, while 71.9% of the population report that they "speak English less than well"(p.5). The numbers reflect a continuing discussion among Puerto Ricans. According to Pousada (1992), "The key danger perceived is the potential loss of Spanish as vernacular and carrier of puertorriqueñidad" (p. 2). However, regardless of whether or not the issue of language was dealt with explicitly on the soldiers' profiles, the alternate

use of English, Spanish and/or Spanglish is itself an evidence of the linguistic tensions – as well as the pleasure of hybridity.

In the event, I found that the language of these profiles was commonly variegated; some soldiers use Spanish to introduce the material in their profiles, others opt for English; even if, in the latter case, the content in other sections (i.e. blogs and notes) tend to be in Spanish. In those cases where all information was in English, the Music Background[60] –in the case of MySpace- was often a popular song in Spanish. There is a long tradition of romantic nationalism that insists on using language as a marker of belonging to the community. In this tradition, those who belong to the community must use the community's dominant tongue. This is partly based on the assumption that one's language is fundamental to one's identity (one's interests, one's loyalties, one's passions). Benedict Anderson, in *Imagined Communities*, points out that the place language played in the nationalisms of the 19th and early 20th century is being replaced by a 'modular' nationalism in which "nations can now be imagined without linguistic commonality". (p. 135) However this may be, in a colony, using the 'native' language may represent an act of resistance to the dominant group.

In the case of SNS self-representation, one can imagine language acting as a code marking inclusion/exclusion When a soldier posts a message or sets his/her status in Spanish, it is intended to be understood only by those who speak the language, creating some kind of complicity and excluding those who only speak English. English, however, the language of the colonial power, codes a different intent. As Ien Ang (2007) states, "the use of English…signals a desire to have a global reach, an international hearing" (p. 58). In a context of the global nature of the war, this could be either a menace or a source of power for the soldiers. To voice their opinions in an often highly scrutinized space

could lead to controversies that the soldier might want to avoid by using Spanish. He can thus escape the censorship that is sporadically directed at the miliblogs.

This mixture of languages is a sign of how the insertion of an identity in a transnational space such as the Internet must be understood and explored as a process full of feedbacks, which means that it is subject to mutation, debate, and negotiation, and follows a non-linear course. The articulation of a Spanglish linguistic identity and its re-articulation into a bisected monolingual one (some parts of the profiles are in English and/or Spanish) makes visual the point at which contestation and negotiation are linguistically materialized. Duany (2009) has shrewdly observed how this process works for Puerto Ricans, who, he writes, display a broad repertoire of language practices – ranging from Spanish monolingualism (primarily on the island) to English monolingualism (primarily on the mainland), including various degrees of bilingualism, as well as inventing varieties of 'Spanglish', a widespread linguistic trait among Puerto Ricans in the United States. This may be considered a cultural asset, especially among second-generation immigrants, who often straddle U.S. and Puerto Rican cultures.

But beyond the language used in the profiles, the textual content information reveals interesting facets of the articulation of the soldiers' ethnonational identities. Here I would try not to treat the design as neutral – it is worth asking where it comes from andwhat its own 'political unconscious' is about. For instance, the MySpace page features, in the left hand column headed by a category entitled 'About Me", a space for the reader to self-report information that one finds on all kinds of fill-in-questionnaires in the off-line world as well – indicating that, even on a site dedicated to "entertainment", the textual forms of a bureaucratic mentality are dominant. There is a category for "Interests" and/or status updates (microblogging). The categories and placement of the sections, as well as their Internet features, will vary depending on the SNS under study,

but the format presents the parameters that the user will fill in to represent him or herself. In what follows I will discuss the ways the soldiers use these self-presentation spaces to write in their ethnonational identity, challenging the taxonomic lists of ethnicities –when available- of the profile.

ABOUT THEM: PUERTO RICAN FIRST AND THEN THE REST

When I created my MySpace profile back in the year 2005, one of the required questions on the sign in menu was race/ethnicity. I use the term 'required' because, as Nakamura (2002) argues, the menu-driven identity online is rigid, presenting options that reflect a mainline consciousness that disallows the self-definition or modification of the social categories available. It is, in its form and its imposition upon users, an instrument that reflects the deep-seated fear and denial of o "the possibility of a mestiza consciousness[61]" (p. 102). Of the limited choices MySpace made available, I routinely choose the category Hispanic/Latino. Regardless of whether or not I was considered 'White' in Puerto Rico, in the continental U.S. the racialization process was completely different. Every time I have been asked 'where you from 'or 'what are you' (referring to nationality) I invariably respond 'I'm Puerto Rican'. However, Puerto Rican is submerged in the U.S. by other labels such as Hispanic or Latino, which have been in the public discourse as a pan-ethnic term since 1960s. Juan Flores (2000) states:

> Hispanic? Latino? Settling on a name never comes easy, and when it comes to an all-embracing terms for Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Dominicans, Colombians, Salvadorians, Panamanians, and an array of other Latin American and Caribbean peoples in the United States, consensus does not seem to be near at hand (p. 203).

Flores insists on "identifying structural variations in the placement of the different national groups relative to hierarchies of power and attendant histories of racialization"

(p. 2003). Latino Caribbean migrants do not enter to a neutral space when they migrate, but into the force field of ethnic and racial types that is the result of the history of these placements and their changes vis-à-vis one another (Georas and Grosfuguel, 2005). Georas and Grosfugel argue that the insertion of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. affected the incorporation of other migrants from the Spanish Caribbean because, like African Americans, Puerto Ricans were not simply migrants or ethnic groups, but were colonial/racialized subjects and second-class citizens annexed into the U.S through an original act of violence. These dynamics set the basis for the inequalities that underlie a Latino/Hispanic category that has been extended to cover a multiplicity of different cultures and ethnicities. The online world does not escape the dynamic of the offline world that created it.

According to Dara N. Byrne (2008), even though the Internet was built around ideas of race-less space, the "the dissolution of racial identification in cyberspace is neither possible nor desirable" (p. 15). She states that the fundamental question, "What are you?" is as personal as it is communal, and that it signifies by creating a self-reflective exercise that must survey, however briefly, the relevance of race to the subject's personality. It functions not just as a request for information, but as a historically determined linguistic marker that points to the fault lines traversing history, culture, nationhood, and identity formation. Byrne adds that users, prompted by such questions, come up with "their personal experiences—signifying their degree of authenticity and authority—by describing their skin color, their bloodline, or their familiarity with back home (food, music, visiting every summer)" (p. 15). It is in this manner that soldiers' profiles offer interesting conceptualizations of how Puerto Ricanness is imagined.

On MySpace, the soldiers I studied chose the Latino/Hispanic category. Although this is a default option, it is not an impersonal or indifferent one. The idea of being part of

a larger Latino imagined community creates a sense of unity that goes beyond their ethnic, cultural, political, and religious differences, having roots in the turn towards panethnicity that emerged in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement. In a war context, the urgency of the battlezone catalyzes a sense of unity and community as a means of survival. Even so, the pan-ethnic imagined community has its own limits. While some (see, for example, Nakamura (2006)) argue that pan-ethnic identity could eventually trump ethnicity or nationality, soldiers' profiles often dispense with the pan-ethnic category of Latino by replacing it with explicit claims for their ethnonational identity. The following extract from the 'About Me' section of a soldier's profile on MySpace is an example of the way race and ethnicity can be played with:

> I'm an 18 year old American solider currently deployed to Iraq. I was born in Old San Juan, Puerto Rico, so I'm a very proud Puerto Rican! My mother was Russian so I look whiter than most Latinos but my heart beats true to my Puerto Rican bloodline. (Display name: Empty Eyes; 19 years old; New York). [62]

It is not strange for Empty Eyes--of white skin and raised in mainland US—to insist on his ethnonational identity, since for him, being Puerto Rican goes beyond skin color. His appeal to the 'bloodline' is made in an almost 'one drop rule' fashion. It is also interesting to point out that, along with his claim to whiteness, he also claims membership in three communities: American, Latino, and Puerto Rican. The next case illustrates a similar situation:

> I'm Raul, I'm 20, born in Puerto Rico, lived there for 9 years and moved to F.L.A. I represent 787 and the 305, Canovanas and Opa-locka...[...]...I'm single; I'm in the Army. Some females can't handle that but hey, shell come but yeah, I'm proud of the person I am and someone will appreciate that without trying to change me. Holla at you boy. (Display name; It's Frag Dont Get It Twisted; 20 years old; Tacoma)[63]

For Raul, the fact that he was born and lived in Puerto Rico for nine years attempts to reifies his Puerto Ricanness. But at the same time, he claims a space in the Puerto Rican

diaspora when he mentions that he also represents the '305'. This is in reference to the telephone area code that belongs to the city of Miami, Florida. It is important to mention that the state of Florida has become one of the most popular destinations for the diaspora. Duany (2007) argues that "diasporic communities are part of the Puerto Rican nation because they continue to be linked to the island by an intense and frequent circulation of people, identities, and practices as well as capital, technology, and commodities" (p. 53). The next example illustrates this:

> Wassup! My name is Ray and I'm representing Brooklyn, NY, and all my Puerto Ricans! I stay over in Columbus, GA, and I'm in the military.well I'm currently single and just trying to live and enjoy life to the fullest. Life is too short to just wonder why shit happens.... just live it love it and "DA WORLD IS URS"...HOLLA. (Display name; Ray; 30 years old; Brooklyn, NY)[64].

Ray associates being from Brooklyn, NY to being Puerto Rican. According to Virginia Sanchez-Korrol, (1994) Brooklyn is one of the great colonias in the history of the Puerto Rican diaspora, with a tradition of competition with the Puerto Rican settlements in Manhattan[65].

Other profiles illustrate revealing insights in the intersections of ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality. For example:

> I am DIVORCED with three children. I am Puerto Rican and live in Killeen Texas for the time being. I am in the army stationed at Fort Hood. I am currently NOT deployed to Iraq. Yo soy Boricua, echo y derecho. Me gustan los get together con amistades. I don't go out much but when I do is party time. I also like to workout so I do keep in shape. If you wanna know more please ask. (Display name; Lolo; 32 years old; Killeen, TX)[66].

In Lolo's case his Puertoricanness serves not only as reference to his ethnonational identity, but also as a way to insist on his masculinity and on his availability as a divorced male. Being a "Boricua, hecho y derecho" ("well rounded" in English) is an announcement of economical stability –he has a job in the Army. Yet it is also an

announcement of ethnonational identity that assumes being both masculine and heterosexual.

In the following example the axis of ethnicity, class and sexuality played an important role:

> Well there isn't too much to know about me but I am Puerto Rican, I was born in San Diego California. But i was raised in Jackson Mississippi. I am Puerto Rican; I come from a big family. My name Is Victor J Hernandez! I am A soldier in the U.S. army so yes ladies I'm paid. I enjoy dancing and partying but I don't like people that get drunk and out of hand. I'm pretty easy going, when people talk I listen... And If I had a special someone in my life she would be treated like a queen. (Display name: Puerto Rican Papi; 26 years old)[67]

Victor Hernandez' ethnonational identity reverberates in both his display name –Puerto Rican Papi- and his self-presentation in the 'About Me.' Section. Yet he is clearly not a native of the island; rather, born and raised in the U.S., he views Puerto Ricanness as a matter of lineage. In this case we can perceive what Duany (2007) refers to "long-distance nationalism", a persistent claim to a national identity by people residing away from their homeland. Hernandez's self-representation must be understood in the context of deterritorialized and transnationalized Puerto Ricanness, which is not anchored to any traditional specific location, such as the island or any of the Puerto Rican diaspora communities in the US mainland. In fact, neither Mississippi nor California is among the group of U.S. states with a large Puerto Rican population. He also plays with stereotypes associated with Puerto Ricans when he insists, for instance, that the military is a paid job, which both challenges the idea of Puerto Ricans as lazy subjects and seems to affirm it by making him an exception.

According to Grosfoguel (2003), "Puerto Ricans of all colors have become a racialized group in the social imaginary of Euro-Americans, marked by racist stereotypes such as laziness, violence, criminal behavior, stupidity, and dirtiness" (p. 165).

Hernandez also plays with the ambiguities encoded in the stereotype of the Latin Lover (Ramírez-Berg, 1997) -a sensual and hypersexed male ready for seduction- when he mentions his dancing skills and the fact that he would treat the special someone 'like a queen', even as he seems to resist certain implications of the role. Once again, the insistence in the heteronormativity of the soldier acquires relevance in the military space on which the politics of Don't Ask Don't Tell (DADT) prohibits gays, lesbian and bisexual service members to disclose their sexual preference.

FACEBOOK GROUPS AND THE POLITICS OF BELONGING

On Facebook, no questions are posed by the sign-up process about ethnicity, race or national identity. In sharp contrast with MySpace, which makes prominent the responses to the questions concerning race/ethnicity, gender, sexual preference, and occupation, Facebook de-emphasizes such categories. According to boyd (boyd, 2010), in trying to measure the race (and, partially, ethnicity) of its users without having self-identification, Facebook uses a statistical technique known as mixture-modeling to make a best guess as to the racial makeup of its user base[68], which is of interest to marketers. However, at the moment I was conducting my research, there was not an official, demographic data breakdown of Facebook available. In order to filter out Puerto Rican soldiers, I was forced to look for other routes, and decided that the best bet was to dig into the networks and the profiles and looking for the traces of Puerto Ricanness, if available.

For instance, the 'Info' section contains several subsections that allow us guess the subject's Puerto Ricanness: current city, hometown, education, work, and networks to which the member belongs are some useful indicators. However, in contrast with the

MySpace profiles, on which the soldiers explicitly articulate their ethnonational identity, on Facebook, the dynamics are different. Since Facebook is ostensibly set up to maintain preexisting offline relationships on an online environment, it uses the term 'friend" both as a verb – to contact a person in order to access his site is to "friend" him – and as a noun classifying those links. This makes the links a community held together by choice – as friendship is a choice, rather than a 'natural' category having to do with birth. I made the assumption that those friends of a selected subject may identify with his or her ethnonational identity. The Facebook display of Puerto Ricanness is less direct than the "I am Puerto Rican" statement, common on MySpace pages. But once one drills down below the official format, one can easily find it.

To be 'Boricua' on Facebook is a multi-faceted experience that relies heavily on resources within the Facebook sphere, as, for example, affiliation to certain Facebook groups. The Groups section is a Facebook feature that works as a way of enabling a number of people who share certain interests to come together online to exchange information and discuss specific subjects. For example, many of the soldiers belong to groups dedicated to those who were born and/or raised in one of the seventy-eight municipalities of Puerto Rico - groups like 'Orgulloso de ser de Caguas, Puerto Rico'[69] (in English, "I am Proud of Being from Caguas, Puerto Rico") and 'Mocano Pa' Que Tu Lo Sepas'[70] (in English, "I'm from Moca, Just So You Know It"). Others have more specific objectives, such as 'El Yunque Tiene que ser una Maravilla'[71] (in English, "The Yunque Rainforest Must Be a Wonder of Nature), which aspires to create a publicity buzz around the Puerto Rico National Forest. Some others allude only to a sense of belongingness and power of the Puerto Rican imagined community. For example, groups like 'Soy de Puerto Rico'[72] (in English, "I'm from Puerto Rico") and 'Yo Apuesto que Puerto Rico Llega a un Millon de Fans'[73] (in English, "I Bet You that Puerto Rico

reaches a Million of Fans") are among the most popular. Others, like U.S. Army 65th Infantry Korea War (100% Puerto Rico)[74], is dedicated to one of the most historically charged battalions in the history of Puerto Ricans in the military.

Furthermore, the descriptions of some of the groups I used to find my units of analysis deserve special attention. In 'Soldados Puertorriquenos', creator Jose Aviles posts this in the profile's description:

> Puerto Ricans are deployed in Korea, Arabia, Iraq, Alaska, Germany, in short, you can find them on the moon; they are active soldiers, reserves, National Guard, Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, veterans, and all of them have one thing in common—they are Puerto Rican soldiers. This page I am creating tries to unite all of us Puerto Ricans who serve on the armed forces, to find old friends or meet new ones; no one will support you or know you better than a Boricua brother; the world is small, and we are everywhere; let's support one another. I will be giving updates and inviting more fellows to join; leave your pics, or whatever you want. If you are Boricua and serve your nation, this is your page.[75].

This description recognizes a Puerto Rican diaspora of serviceman and women in bases around the world. The idea of being everywhere parallels the phenomenon Duany (2007) refers to as a nation 'on the move', expanding the ceaseless flow back and forth between the island and the U.S. mainland to the global stations that this mainland power has erected. The creator of the group goes further when he states that Puerto Ricans can be found even on the moon, which may be a reference to Juan Antonio Corretjer's[76] poem 'Boricua en La Luna' (Boricua on the Moon), popularized as a song recently by the group *Fiel a La Vega*. One fragment of the poem says, "Y así le grito al villano: yo sería borincano aunque naciera en la luna" (in English _"And so I yell at the villain: I'd be Puerto Rican, even if I were born on the moon."). 'Boricua en La Luna' is a poem with a nationalist undertone that critiques the colonial relationship between the U.S. and Puerto Rico, and blatantly calls the U.S. a "villain," which seems to be a paradoxical reference for a group of soldiers under the command of the U.S. DoD. But the use of 'Boricua en la

Luna' is not only paradoxical from the point of view of Puerto Rican nationalism, but also from the point of view of the meaning, in imperialist terms, of that global diaspora. These soldiers represent an imperial power which has colonized their homeland. However, this duplicity could be explained by two registers of reading, in one of which the group distinguishes Puerto Rico as a nation and equates the service in the military as a service to the nation of Puerto Rico, while in the second, the group identifies the nation with the U.S., of which it is a 'protectorate', making military service to the one the equivalent of service to the other.

The group 'Para Nuestros Soldados Boricuas' contains the following information within its description:

> I do not like war or anything of the like, and I hope it is over as soon as possible… However, there are some friends who, for any reason, are in Iraq serving the army. A very difficult situation, since many of them miss their families and their little island. Imagine yourself being in a place where there is plenty of violence, where your language and culture is different, a place where you are alone. While packing chocolate, coffee, and magazines for our friend Claudio… and knowing how happy my friend Iván was after receiving a package for Christmas, or just by receiving an e-mail or a letter, it occurred to me that we can help and support our Boricuas who are far from home. Therefore, I would like to use this medium to start a project for motivating all of my friends and other Facebook members to send letters, packages, and good vibes to those who are away from home. [77].

This vignette deserves special attention for several reasons. It stresses the challenges of being in the battle zone not only because of the danger, but also because of the estranging quality of the cultural differences (i.e. language, food, local media products). The cultural difference is not simply a matter of displacement to Iraq and Afghanistan as theaters of war, but, as well, displacement from the Puerto Rican to immersion in the mainland American culture of the military space, where the coercive relations of power are necessarily overt. However, it is through the use of cultural items, such as food (i.e.

coffee) or even print media (i.e. local magazines) that the soldier will feel "just like home". Margaret Morse (1998) argues, "feeling at home is, in essence, a personal and culturally specific link to the imaginary". (p. 63). She mentions that smells, tastes, textures and sounds provide possible "doors to a consciousness" of what home should feel like. Thus, the circulation of certain goods that are charged with "home" aspects - such as magazines from home, or food - between the intra-contact zone and the trans-contact zone is a way of manipulating the home illusion abroad.

But according to the founder of the Facebook group 'Para Nuestros Soldados Boricuas', the original intention was to target only those Puerto Ricans who are originally from the "islita" (small island), to the exclusion of those who live on the U.S. mainland. A Puerto Rican soldier is defined, from this viewpoint, as one who left the island to go to the battlefield; while those diaspora Puerto Ricans, who have also been stationed in U.S. and international bases around the world before departing to the battlefield, are excluded from "our" Puerto Ricans. Is this an oversight? Or is it a dismissal – extending to those second and third generation of U.S. born Puerto Ricans who serve in the military?

The perhaps involuntary exclusion of diaspora Puerto Ricans parallels the common exclusion of 'Nuyoricans' –term use to make reference to those second and third generation Puerto Ricans in the US- from '*La Gran Familia Puertorriqueña*'. According to Miriam Jimenez-Román (2008), in the 1970s, when Puerto Rico started receiving return migrants from the U.S., they were already perceived as a problem. She argues that "the image of Nuyoricans as immoral, violent, dirty, lazy, welfare-dependent, drug-addicted felons was not restricted to the United States; to this day, both countries produce media images that depict stateside Puerto Ricans as overwhelmingly engaged in some type of objectionable behavior". I am not claiming here that 'Para Nuestros Soldados Boricuas' intentionally supports this image, but I am suggesting that such

negative images leave their traces in the unconscious motives that shape the self-representation of this group, and in fact any group that is in the process of developing an 'our' space, one which necessarily excludes an Other.

MICROBLOGGING

Another textual form in which the soldiers talk about their identity is microblogging. Microblogging consists of broadcasting short, real-time messages that could be a small sentence, a picture, or a video embedded in the profile. The more common term, officially sanctioned by the SNS, is "status updates". These are what keep SNS pages alive. The reason one goes to a Facebook or MySpace page the second time is for an update. The SNS affords a space where the user – in this case, soldiers - can comment on an endless array of topics, such as birthdays, anniversaries, news of the day, interpersonal relationships, what they do not like about war scenarios, what they eat, suffer, or bear, and - among the most common posts - what they miss about Puerto Rico. These comments can in turn be commented on.

One of the profiles I analyzed was that of Sgt. Katherine Soler Fontanez. She opened her Facebook account just a couple of months after her arrival in Iraq. Since then, I have been following her digital story. Her very first status update says:

> Katherine Soler Fontanez is working, another day in Iraq!!!!!!.... 11:15 PM January 26 at 2:14pm

Given the terms of the soldier's commitment, which entails cycling between the battlezone and other sites on the tour of duty, it isn't surprising that soldiers count down their time. Another pattern is stressing the fact that being a soldier is a job like any other. However, they acknowledge that it is work performed under extreme conditions:

> Katherine Soler Fontanez WORKING.... GETTING HOT NOW IN IRAQ 12:30PM..... February 15 at 3:27am

The weather difference is something that has been brought up among Puerto Rican soldiers throughout their experiences not only in the current theaters of war, but also in past wars. The Korean winter was, notoriously, one of the biggest challenges for Puerto Rican soldiers serving during that war. The service personnel were not used to such severe cold due to the mild to tropical weather in Puerto Rico. But Puerto Rican heat is different from Iraq's heat, which is worthy of capitalized letters.

> Katherine Soler Fontanez GOING TO THE GYM NOW... SALSA NIGHT LATER February 25 at 7:36am

The U.S. military has long incorporated a strong recreational component among its forces to keep up morale, and combat one of the most crippling of battlezone enemies, boredom. A very common reference among the soldiers' microblogging is 'Salsa Night. This is a new development, indicating the extent to which the influx of women into the military has changed the composition of base camp time. Once a week the battalion drinks non-alcoholic beverages and stays up past midnight at their base recreation center dancing, not only to salsa, but also to other Spanish Caribbean music genres such as bachata and merengue[78]. It is important to point out that many of the Puerto Rican soldiers give dance lessons during Salsa Nights. This activity puts them –and other Latino soldiers with dancing skills—in a position of power. Because power relationships are relatively rigid in the military, recreational time, in which, officially, there is some relaxation of the official observance of hierarchy, allows for blowing off steam, and the establishment of other power relationships that may traverse rank. Given the power relationships holding between genders, the modifications in the base's recreational time can lead to interesting permutations of power. For instance:

> Katherine Soler Fontanez It's comedy hour… and today it's feminist day. Sorry guys. What do men and clouds have in common? –When they finally run off; it's a very nice day!!!… May 6 at 6:06am

Military space is much more misogynistic than even military critics expect (Antecol & Cobb-Clark, 2001; Benedict, 2008). According to Helen Benedict (2008), despite the U.S. Military zero-tolerance policy on rape and sexual harassment, "an alarming number of women soldiers are being sexually abused by their comrades-in-arms, at war and at home". Given such a context, it is not uncommon to see Soler Fontanez's kind of a joke among female soldier statuses. The joke, on the surface, is a challenge, issued by a female Puerto Rican soldier, against "men" – which is how feminist day is interpreted. The joke takes over a form that is common in male jokes about women – in which the sexual desirability of women is undercut by the idea that women somehow 'burden" men. Here, the terms are reversed, challenging their male counterpart's dominance, at least of this kind of joke. Yet the supposed "anti-male" slant of feminism is prefaced by "Sorry guys", which is on the one hand reinforces a view of female and male equality as inherently 'anti-male', and on the other hand numbs any objection to the assertion of that equality by putting it in denial. It both hedges the joke – it is not to be taken seriously – and allows it to happen – expressing an irritation, perhaps, with a certain style of military male. The relations of dominance of men over women in the military are suspended and reinstated – which is the function of this kind of humor.

These updates are individually centered. But beyond the individual digital stories, configured within their status update, there is also a sense of belonging to a digital imagined community. For example, when a 5.7 earthquake struck Puerto Rico on May 16, 2010, there was a sense of empathy with those in the island:

> Katherine Soler Fontanez my people of Puerto Rico I hope you are alright and may God bless you all May 16 at 2:44am

This message is meant to provide moral support for the people on the island from a soldier who identifies with them. This reverses the direction of care we saw with 'Para Nuestros Soldados Boricuas' and points to the hidden contradiction grounding real-time communication – real space and distance still remain as the condition of communication.

Among the differences and commonalities observed throughout microblogging rants, there is a general agreement between the soldiers: a profound desire to return home. Soler Fontanez status stated it in sarcastic tone:

> Katherine Soler Fontanez Today the Army celebrates its 235th birthday… I've been here only 3 and already what to get the $%&@ out of here… haha… June 13 at 10:51 am

The desire to return "home" is a point of interception within the complex structure of the articulation process. As part of their ethnonational identity, this desire is related to the charged idea of home as the familiar place in which one sleeps, eats, raises children, and sustains a certain level of comfort and safety For the soldier home inevitably takes on a political value –signaling the end of one's participation in a conflict, it cannot be neutral. For a Puerto Rican soldier, in a conflicted relationship with the power he or she serves, the political meaning of home is even more complicated, as home is, in a sense, occupied.

In the next section, I will discuss the soldiers' photo galleries available in MySpace and Facebook. I will take into consideration the captions at the bottom of the pictures as part of the discourse I intend to analyze. A text/image dichotomy is crucial for understanding the visual narrative of the overall image of the soldier, and for avoiding the ways in which Puerto Rican soldiers have been placed in several vacuums – the everyday vacuum of their service and the vacuum of inattention that has obscured their place in mainstream histories.

THE GRAMMAR OF IMAGES OF THE PUERTO RICAN SOLDIER

The articulation of identity is a very visual process in which the optics of social interaction – interaction between human bodies shapes the objects of our texts and the visual media of our identity. The human body is a natural and universal human visual media, the carrier and purpose of meaning, and made so by its manipulation and display. As boyd (2007b) points out, when the body is displayed on SNS, it becomes a performative object:

> [the body] serves as a critical site of identity performance. In conveying who we are to other people, we use our bodies to project information about ourselves. This is done through movement, clothes, speech, and facial expressions. What we put forward is our best effort at what we want to say about who we are. (p. 11)

As I mentioned early on this chapter, the SNS provides the user with a platform for articulating a multimediatic digital body, by which I mean one made up of an assembly of texts, videos, and images of the subject. Is it possible, then, to outline a field of meanings peculiar to Puerto Rican soldiers, distinguishing them from Puerto Rican civilians and all non-Puerto Ricans? Is there an ideolect of images?

The profile picture is the dominant SNS interface image. The browser's first impulse, on coming to a page, is to see what the page's owner 'looks like'. Whether or not the photo albums in the profiles are set to private, the profile picture will mostly be available to the public[79]. According to Mendelson and Papacharissi the profile image is the introduction of the self, and one of the chief original selling points for SNS, which facilitated the easy upload of digital images for the personal styling of the user's page . It is perhaps the most important part of the performative palette that a SNS offers. Therefore, when a soldier presents himself/herself on a SNS, they are supposedly able to chose to have some control over the version of themselves they select; that selectivity,

that intentionality which not only displays the apparently objective image, but selects it from a potentially enormous set of other images, is what makes the image peculiarly telling. Given a repertoire of pictures, it bears the mark of something chosen to engage the viewer, and thus, by implication, points to the larger cultural stories about community, class, gender, sexuality, and for the purpose of my research, the ethnonationality that the viewer and the SNS member share. The pictures put online by Puerto Rican soldiers, for instance, will inevitably reaffirm and/or challenge culturally structured values about their Puerto Ricanness. In what follows I will discuss the ways in which the soldiers use the profile picture to articulate their identity, often by putting themselves within the stereotypes associated with U.S. Latinos. Owning the cultural stereotypes is an often seen tactic in which dominated groups adopt dominant ideology selectively (Orbe, 1998). I will argue that Puerto Rican soldiers get inside these stereotypes as an empowering move. It is by this theft and inversion of meanings and values that the subjected subject transforms the gaze of the stereotype into an object of desire (Diawara, 1998).

Re-articulating the Stereotypes

When I was conducting the online ethnography, I was able to identify certain patterns in the grammar of images in MySpace and Facebook profile pictures that were subsets of the patterns used by Puerto Ricans in general to self-represent themselves within traditional, Latino cultural archetypes. In the case of males, two of the major archetypes were the exotic-erotic Latin lover, crossed with an intriguing fusion between the freedom fighter and the urban gangster. On the other hand, females will often adopt

the vocabularies of the Latin Sexy Spitfire or of the suffering Madonna (Habell-Pallan & Romero, 2002, Rivera, 2003).

When looking through the male soldiers' galleries, it was easy to identify a grammar of images. Their set of profile pictures (the SNS offer the ability to download many pictures, some of which can be circulated into the profile pic position) was either a) the image of the soldier in his official military uniforms or b) the picture of himself stripped to the waist, wearing only military pants. In some cases the soldiers would be carrying a weapon in a very Scarface kind of pose. The image of Scarface with a gun in each hand spitting fury on scores of enemies is iconic in Latino popular culture. According to Damarys Ocaña (Ocaña, 2008), the filmic Cuban drug lord has become an idol "especially… among young blacks and Latinos and in the hip hop community…despite Pacino's ridiculous accent and overacting…and despite Montana's clichéd characterization as an out-of-control Latin macho who loves sex, flashy clothes and tacky furniture". She argues that Scarface depicts the lurid underside of the American dream of wealth and power, which is attractive for those who feel an unbridgeable abyss between themselves and the money, power and respect of the elite.

In terms of the exposure of the male body, the profile pictures that male soldiers self-selected tended to display their bodies as a site of ambiguous resistance to the official discourse of the military (which masks its violence with a discourse of discipline, uniformity, liberation and liberty), as well as to the particular threats of combat. Those bodies, as we know, are easily woundable in the combat zone, and could suffer traumatic injuries in the near future that no amount of bodybuilding could prevent. The amputee is the shadow side of the military macho – and in a war in which improvised explosive device are the weapon of choice of the other side, the amputee's fate, which can come out of anywhere, haunts the most buff soldier. Foucault (1988) suggests that a number of

technologies of the self have been devised – mental and physical exercises, forms of care - that permit individuals to transform themselves in order to attain certain states of "happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality" (p. 18). To expose the body on the Internet as one that is exposed in the battlezone is to let the world know "I have survived this," while at the same time making one a, perhaps, unconscious monument to the corpse or wounded soldier one can become. It is also a way to sexualize a body that, historically, has been desexualized through a historical infantilization.

In the case of the women, many of their profile pictures were arranged in two preferred stereotyped categories: the devoted mother (Virgin Mary) and a hyper feminized sexy Latina. The first stereotype was labeled '*marianismo*' by a sociologist, Evelyn Stevens (1973), and the term has caught on[80]. [] For those who are mothers, the image holding or accompanying their respective sons and/or daughters was really prominent. Those who were not specifically mothers were shown in a similar portrait but with their nephews and/or nieces. The sort of images that connoted the relation to the Virgin Mary were those that resembled the image of Our Lady of Providence[81] (Patron Saint of Puerto Rico) in which Mary is holding her child in her arms. This is a very traditional and common figure in the imagery of Caribbean Catholicism. There is a striking contradiction in this image: the scenario of the WOT is in reality the exact denial of this embracing motherhood, as the woman in actuality is leaving her children back home for the specific task of thrusting herself into the battlezone. Especially in this war, in Iraq and Afghanistan, the battle zones are not defined and segregated from civilian or base camp life. The social reality of the gender mixed military has more to do with the cultural and economic realities of the two earner household than the traditional American white middle class image of the full time mother, or Latina *marianismo*. But the

ideological reality of the military is that of an extremely conservative institution, which generates a conflict of images.

Another image, in sharp contrast to the Virgin Mary, disembodied in the suggestive poses and attire favored by some female soldiers (i.e. tight jeans, miniskirts, bathing suits, etc). The re-articulation of the Latina Spitfire archetype is juxtaposed with pictures put up by those same women in their respective military uniforms carrying their weapons, and posing with their male counterparts. In this case I would argue that the hyper-feminized body is a site in which a strategy of resistance is being worked out by women who are battling sexism and misogyny every day in the male-dominated war zone. These women face the constant questioning of their sexual preferences by male counterparts who are not necessarily comfortable with the liberal idea of both genders being assigned roles in the military. In reacting against the charge of lesbianism by assuming an exaggerated iconography of heterosexuality, these female soldier pictures negotiate a difficult semiotic problem: they display how capable they are of completing the military duty and in so doing evoke images of the masculinized female, and then try to turn the picture by displaying pictures that are organized by the grammar of heterosexual availability. In this defensive maneuver, the escape from one negative stereotype can reinforce another.

Herman S. Gray (2004) suggests that it "is important to move beyond mere questions of access, stereotypes, and idealized representations" (p. 144). He recommends an engagement with new technologies and the terms they establish in order to understand the changing modes in which the practice of identity and the cultural politics of difference plays itself out, and challenges cultural studies scholars to take into account the new formats and forums of representation that are being generated on the Internet as it emerges from the landscape of the older media. Certainly, the penetration of

telecommunications into every aspect of private life, the emergence of SNS, the new capacity to self-publish and the changed configuration of the space in which subjects compete for attention has made Gray's challenge relevant to my study. In looking at these visual self-representations, I want to see how they may serve as vectors that lead to cultural and political transgressions that break with oppressive hegemonic norms, but I am also aware that transgressive power is limited by the institutional power that permits it, and the floating norms and stereotypes that are the inevitable counterparts of any form of self-representation, whether one tries to inhabit them and alter them from within or challenge them from without.

It is from this perspective that the military relationship with SNS becomes paradigmatically interesting, in as much as the military structure emphasizes and discloses hierarchy, while at the same time taking into its ranks a greater variety of ethnicities and classes than is the norm for any other American organization (at least, of adults), including higher education. . Thus, the response of the military to the penetration of new media even into the private sphere of the soldier should be seen as a limit case for its more widespread effects, where the institutional norms are not so manifest, and the punishments for disobedience so difficult to escape.

INKING IDENTITY

In the documentary *Tattooed Under Fire* (2009), director Nancy Schiesari presents an "intimate, character-driven portrait of Iraq-bound and returning U.S. soldiers as they go under the tattoo needle: openly professing their pride, sharing their secrets and confessing their fears". As with civilians, the tattoos cross lines of gender, class, and political affinity, revealing the inner lives of young men and women on their outward

skin. However, as one might expect, unlike civilians, the tattoos often refer to the WOT. The idea of the body as a site of memory and resistance acquires relevance when we consider that a soldier's body is never exclusively his own. According to Campanella (1999) "The military can dictate both physical restrictions and physical requirements such as hair length, body fat percentages, physical training standards, consumption of alcohol or drugs, even forbidding sexual acts between consenting adults" (p 56). Living in these conditions, the soldiers realize on some level that they have surrendered their bodies officially to the defense of the United States' Constitution, however the powers that be interpret that "defense". However, the vagueness of the Army's body-art policy allows the soldiers to turn their body into a mural wall. Terence Turner (1982) uses the phrase social skin to suggest an interface between the biological surface of the body and the cultural surface. The color of skin has, evidently, had a historically overwhelming impact on the development of modernity; but skin can also operate as a medium, becoming a vehicle to display symbols of identity and desire.

For example, one of the soldiers uploaded his pictures of his tattoo, which consists of the phrase, "I hope for better days, trouble comes naturally running from my own faith till it captures me…" Another soldier shows two tattoos to naively depict his own identity divide, with one armed tattooed with the question, "Who I am?" while the other says "Familia" (Family). Another case is of a serviceman who displays a tattoo with the Puerto Rican flag that says "Soldado Boricua" (in English: Puerto Rican Soldier). The flag is a popular motif. Scott Guenter (2001) has discussed the dynamics of flag tattoos as markers of social class, and more complexly, sexuality. He states that part of the impact of the tattoo is our recognition of its permanence. He states "flag tattoos emphasize and imply extremely powerful personal identifications" (p. 205).

Guenter mentions a 'tattoo rage" that made tattoos briefly fashionable among the European aristocracy in the late nineteenth century – but, in the twentieth century, tattoos, and particularly flag tattoos, were more readily and consistently found among the military and working class in America. Guenter argues that when affiliative groups use flag tattoos, they are defining themselves as warriors, enrolling themselves in the totem class of such masculine groups as marines, soldiers, and sailors. In this regard, this form of 'flagging' serves as a vehicle for Puerto Rican soldiers to reiterate an ethnonational identity that mediates between the two public poles of service with the U.S. army and a Puerto Rican nationalism, and the two private poles of a trans-contact zone in dialectic with an intra-contact zone.

BEYOND THE CAMOUFLAGE: THE THIN LINE BETWEEN MIMICRY AND MOCKERY

In the soldiers' profiles, the lines between mimicry and mockery are really thin. The act of mimicry refers to the way the colonized mirror the colonizer's norms and translates them into their own (Bhabha, 1994). This performance allows colonized people, embedded in a contact zone, to subvert full assimilation intentionally in order to retain control of their identity (Noelle-Ignacio, 2005). The recurrent image of the soldier wearing his military uniform but displaying the Puerto Rican flag is an expression of this subaltern pattern. This juxtaposition mimics the official discourse of the U.S. military, where the U.S. flag is usually displayed to stake a claim in the war zones. By transposing the flags, the stakes are – perhaps unconsciously – shifted. Just as flags stake a claim, so does graffiti – and not surprisingly, graffiti appears in photos on SNS pages made by the soldiers in several parts of the theatres of war. The insistence of marking the territory with a national icon acquires special significance in battlezone scenarios.

According to Frances Negron-Muntaner (Negrón-Muntaner, 2004), historically, "To the extent to which the Puerto Rican flag had been associated with subversion of the colonial state and U.S. sovereignty made it a useful symbol for nationalist struggle throughout the rest of the century" (p. 169). However, the commodification of the flag began after the decade of the 1970s and reached its peak during the early 1990s. "In the U.S., Puerto Ricans have mainly deployed the flag as a sign to claim a distinct ethnicity and call attention to the value of the boricua culture" (p. 170). For example, during the Puerto Rican Day Parade, the flag serves as the marker of the space that the Boricuas occupy temporarily. My argument is that the flag still does double duty as a signifier by subverting the official U.S. military discourse (which puts the U.S. flag at the top of its hierarchy) and imitating the peculiar pride that is instilled into the soldier vis-à-vis national symbols – which are construed as symbols that are 'fought for', that are 'paid for in blood', etc.

Hommi Bhaba argues that in "the colonial discourse…[which] describes the tension between the synchronic panoptical vision of domination - the demand for identity, stasis - and the counter pressure of the diachrony of history - change, difference - mimicry represents an ironic compromise" (p. 85). The ironic is that mode in which the surface meaning of an utterance is opposite from its real meaning in use, and the ironic mechanism thus depends on contextual cues. To understand if something is meant ironically is to understand those cues, and the routines in which something is meant seriously. The ironic is, by its very nature, self-reflexive. Internet culture valorizes the self-reflexive, the ironic, the sarcastic, partly as a defense reflex, partly as a way of separating who is "in" on a joke or a symbol and who is out. Thus, when reading the images available on these profiles, we must looking for the way in which one level of use can be subverted by another – look for the interplay between affirming and unconsciously

challenging national rituals within the terrain of an intra-contact zone. Through this kind of performance, the official discourses of the military goes through subversion, reconfiguration, and negotiation.

ARTICULATION IN FLUX

The arguments I present in this chapter are meant as hermeneutic guides to help us interpret the semiotics of the soldier's use of SNS –they are not meant to capture the totality of this semiotic field. At the moment I was turning in the manuscript, in 2010, the WOT was still ongoing. After a change of strategy, the DoD has stationed a minimum of troops in Iraq but also reinforced their presence in Afghanistan. This meant that Puerto Rican soldiers are still being cycled through tours in the Middle East and Central Asia. In fact, after the changes of strategy during the month of August, 2011, one of the very first casualties in Afghanistan was a Puerto Rican soldier, 20-year-old Pedro Millet Melletiche[82]. At the same time, new media technologies were also evolving and becoming more penetrative and normative within the public and private spheres. Thus, more complex articulations of identities are emerging from SNS. The generation of SNS became so manifold that I had to choose to close my study with MySpace and Facebook, excluding Twitter, which came onto the scene well after I began this study in 2006. As a matter of closure I would like to summarize some of my final thoughts in regards of the self-representation of my online ethnography of Puerto Rican soldiers on MySpace and Facebook from 2006 until 2009.

From MySpace to Facebook, from Facebook to...

As I was finishing up my research I began to notice how MySpace, previously known as the number one SNS for U.S. soldiers (boyd 2007), was starting to lose a considerable number of the profiles owned by Puerto Rican soldiers I had been looking at. I noticed, too, a difference in the fall off from MySpace between Puerto Ricans who lived on the island and those who lived in the U.S. – the latter were sticking with MySpace more often than the former. This trend agrees with the observation originally made by boyd, and confirmed by other researchers, that the different SNS quickly became differently racialized. Their argument was that MySpace was becoming the network of preference for blacks and Latinos (Hargittai 2007; boyd 2010) by a sort of white flight to Facebook. On the other hand, Facebook profiles increased considerably among islander soldiers.

This observation could simply confirm the marketing strategy of Facebook, which presented itself, from the beginning, as a higher end social network site than MySpace, as I explained in the introduction. Since the number of Puerto Ricans enrolled in college is higher among the island population than among the stateside Puerto Ricans, this should affect the demographics of the SNS. However, there is no evidence that island soldiers are enrolled in college at a higher rate than mainland soldiers. One can speculate that as Facebook has devolved from its selective strategy to one that depends on enrolling its users as marketers, encouraging lateral relationships via "friending". The island family and friends are more likely to involve island soldiers they are in contact with in Facebook. Again, these are speculations, although they fit with the strategies separately pursued by Facebook and MySpace. I also noticed that many soldiers who moved from MySpace to Facebook did so at the time of their deployment, which has made me wonder if Facebook is perceived within the ranks as the more reliable or acceptable SNS in

comparison to MySpace, with the latter's emphasis on display and more variegated demographic.

To be Puerto Rican in the era of SNS

The result of my research leads me to argue, tentatively, that a distinct ethnonational identity online has been improvised by Puerto Ricans using SNS. Yet, as one would expect, the factors of this identity are by no means completely determined by the media situation: on the contrary, social conditions offline, here, are the determinants that mix with the online environment that is also determined, in its design, resources, and reach largely by offline developments in politics, commerce and technology. However, the online environment is still not fully determined by the offline world and feeds back into it. Thus, the major shifts that occurred on the Internet in a relatively short period of time over the 2000s testify to the unpredictability of the online sphere – witness the changing fortunes of Facebook and MySpace. This is all part of the articulation process as Stuart Hall understood it, in which descriptive and performative speech acts are embedded in complex media fields in which the signified/signifier relation is defined both through differences and similarities of the unit of signification.

Within the horizon defined by the WOT, Puerto Rican soldiers self represent in relation to complex histories of imperialism and colonial, racial/ethnic, and social hierarchies that they can not fully articulate or reflect upon. Nor, it should be said, do Internet ethnographers have any total grasp of this process. What is certain is that the Internet did not trace the utopian trajectory some of its 90s advocates dreamed of. Rather, it reproduces a new "contact zone" that is a product of the circulation between a trans-contact zone and an intra-contact zone. SNS function, then, as a sort of "portable contact

zone" in which, as Pratt (1992) explains, colonial encounters occur and peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of exploitation, radical inequality, and intractable conflict. In this regard, Puerto Ricans from two different intra-contact zone, the island and the mainland, will typically share the same space but experience different ways of approaching, performing, and understanding their ethnonational identity.

On MySpace, those born in the U.S. affectively invest a great deal in their Puerto Ricanness in their profiles. I have argued that this could be a response to a social fact signaled by the very process of signing up: Puerto Ricans feel, on the one hand, the need not to be submerged in the monolithic mainland identity of Latino/Hispanic, the only identity choice that MySpace makes available. It is as if the absence of the category calls into being its stronger presence on the SNS. For this reason, one can argue that, on MySpace, soldiers prioritize their Puerto Rican identities. Once Puerto Ricanness is displayed, soldiers will begin to detail other identity layers such as sexuality, class, and/or religion. At this level of articulation, the Puerto Rican soldier usually represents himself as a heterosexual male, seductive, and hard working, or as a heterosexual female, either motherly or seductive, and equal in her military capability to men.

On Facebook, given the fact that ethnic or racial categories are officially downplayed – not offered in the official design of the site - Puerto Ricanness appears in more subtle ways. For instance, it expresses itself through the affiliation to groups of national pride, where it serves as a parameter of inclusion. But on the individual level, Puerto Ricanness appears through microblogging, in the status updates where the soldiers engage in conversations about the "micro-practices" of their ethnonational identity (Poster, 2001).

A good example of ethnonational coding concerns cuisine, a perpetual military topic. There are constant references to foods and drinks from the island's cuisine that appear in the status entries. In many cases, microblogging rants would consist of what they wanted to eat once they got home. Similarly, once deployment is over, characteristically, the very first thing that soldiers microblog about was what they ate when they arrived home. Others would microblog about holding a local cold beer. The music is also another reference about their Puerto Ricanness. The SNS make a special point of allowing links to videos and especially music videos, which allows the end user to develop individual 'playlists' that express the individual's taste and act as lures for connecting to others. Embedded videos of salsa and reggaeton are thus a widespread feature of Puerto Rican profiles. This inventory of cultural elements occurs on these spaces quickly inverts the attempt to sweep the SNS environment clean of what Poster (2001) refers to as "factories of ethnicity".

The self-representation of soldiers on SNS reenacts, in many ways, the same relations of power and dominance we see in the offline world. From the political perspective of the American establishment, U.S. Puerto Ricans are outsiders in relation to the American mainland, yet well inside the spectrum of American power as a territory. This image is mirrored online domain of Facebook, for instance; in the ideal digitally imagined community of aspiring high achievers (which is the brand importance of the original Harvard base of Facebook), there is a zero degree of ethnicity, or, rather, an assumed universal White ethnicity. As I have shown, gestures of ethnonational identity must be seen in relation to these parameters; the parameters determine a semiotically charged space within which the similar, the social practices prevailing in offline worlds, are re-articulated. That re-articulation circulates around issues of belonging - who belongs and who does not belong to *La Gran Familia Puertorriqueña*. The very structure

of membership on Facebook, with its preference for 'friends" – relationships of alliance rather than kinship – endows the family metaphor with a subaltern value.

In the end, these spaces will reveal, as Madhavi Mallapragada (2006) argues, ambivalence, hybridity, uneven power relations and strategic alliances as symptomatic of a community shaped by diverse histories of migration and different imaginings of the homeland. What has been ignored in the scholarly literature, in this analytic tradition, is the military experience, and its effects on acculturation, gender relations, and belonging. Leal (2003), among others, has mentioned the armed forces as an instrument of acculturation in modern governance. Certainly this has been true in American history – the Army, for instance, was the first American institution to be integrated, under a presidential order by Harry Truman. This was made possible, in a society that was thoroughly pervaded by a segregationist ethos, because military service removes people from civilian society and puts them through an unusual experience of risk for the community as a whole. The military then has a quasi-representative status vis-à-vis the republic. In this larger framework, I am looking for particular differences that answer the question: how does this acculturation process work for Puerto Rican soldiers? Bracketing the top down process of governance, in this project I am as concerned with looking for the hermeneutics of acculturation on the level of self-articulation. The Internet provides a quantitatively vast amount of data for my project, but its mechanism and effects are not self-evident.

In general terms, I have found that Puerto Rican servicemen and women express their pride in doing the job - because they understand their service as a real job. A job that entails duties, but also rewards. A reward that is precisely, after finishing their duties, the return 'home' to -as many of them stated on their profiles- spend time with their family and friends, eat Puerto Rican food, enjoy a local beer, and/or spend a day at the

beach. The penetration of interactive communication in the private sphere of soldiers has given Puerto Rican soldiers an opportunity, on one level, to make their military diaspora a personalized diaspora. How? By marking it with a stock of symbols and references of their ethnonational identity. In conclusion, the instances of self- representation became acts of enunciation of their Puerto Ricanness within complex layered histories of imperialism, racism, heterosexism, and second-class citizenship.

Chapter III: Mash-up Identities: Puerto Rican Soldiers in User-Generated-Content Scene

In a telling sign of the Zeitgeist, in 2006 the Times Magazine Person of the Year was dedicated to "You," referring to the common citizen. It was a historical moment that marked, on the one hand, the worldwide deflation of respect for authority figures – presidents, thinkers, policymakers – and, on the other hand, the rise of Social Networking Sites (SNS) and User Generated Content Sites (UGC), which provided a vector by which raw self-representation intruded itself in an unprecedented manner on the media world. Andy Warhol's prophecy that in the future, everyone would garner fifteen minutes of fame was uttered at a time in which the monopoly of the attention space was held by traditional media such as radio, film, and television. The prophecy was both fulfilled and rendered obsolete by the introduction of the digital social media. In social media, everyone had the opportunity of lasting much longer than fifteen minutes and of living an illusion by becoming quasi-celebrities. Nick Couldry (2003) argued that the distance between "ordinary citizen" and "celebrity" in the mainstream media can only be shortened when the ordinary person gains access to mass-media making modes, thus making the transition from an ordinary world to the media world: precisely UGC platforms' initial goal, especially YouTube.

From the start, the website's official rhetoric has been cast in this democratizing mode, as an interest in transforming ordinary citizens into 'extraordinary' ones. In 2005, the "About Us" section on YouTube invited its visitors to "Show off your favorite videos of the world. Take videos of your dogs, cats, and other pets. Blog the videos you take with your digital camera or cell phone...etc". Upon writing this dissertation, the promotional tag line of the website was "Broadcast yourself". This was precisely what many servicemen and women were doing from the battlefield during their deployment.

Since their introduction into the military, soldiers have used UGCs to represent their experience from base to battlefield deployment. The content of the videos range from showing parts of the missions, interactions with locals, daily life at the military camp, to music videos and other kinds of entertainment. My argument in this chapter is that Puerto Rican soldiers serving in the War on Terror (WOT) use user- generated-content sites (UGC) such as YouTube and Vimeo to achieve, on a lower professional level, the recombination, remixing and reconfiguring of their ethnonational identities online in ways that often challenge, yet sometimes reproduce their colonial-racial subjectivity and second-class citizen.

These videos have all been made in the cultural remix atmosphere of the 00s (Lessig, 2008). The remix culture is one in which people take the existing artifacts of their culture (i.e. videos, text, images, audio files, music, etc) and endlessly recombine them, thus both marking their membership in the culture and distancing themselves from it. It has its roots, as well, in the urban DIY aesthetic of hip-hop that began in the eighties, and extends it to the Internet through the kind of remixing tools that have made it relatively easy to do mash-ups. My research interest in the production, storage, and circulation of these videos is premised on the idea that most of the Puerto Rican soldiers in the WOT (predominantly young, predominantly growing up in a popular culture that is laced through with the legacy of the hip-hop aesthetic and a comfort with the Internet) are embedded in a "Remix Culture".

My argument follows the lines of Serazio (2008), who argues that that a remix cultural atmosphere allows instances of irony, empowerment, and re-appropriation. This is possible because, in remixing, there is an implicit instance of deconstruction that recalls the history and politics behind the object being remade (Navas, 2010). I am also intrigued by the ways in which an alternative cultural citizenship is configured in the

objects these soldiers make, using these platforms. The argument of a cultural citizenship focuses on common experiences, learning processes, and discourses of empowerment that shift away from a concern with equality to a recognition of difference (Delanty, 2007). UGC platforms operate as a convenient and powerful space for constructing cultural difference, insofar as they become an "enabler of encounters…across belief systems" (Burgees and Green, 2009, p.76).

These articulations occur within the three main experiential standpoints which I have mentioned throughout my dissertation: the soldiers' home/military base before deployment, the battlefield, and the dialectical space made up of competing memories between home and the battlefield. I will be looking specifically at four kinds of videos: 1) the home-front habitus; 2) the soldiers at their military base; 3) the soldiers in the battlefield; and 4) original content (music and/or documentary videos). The "home-front videos" capture their habitus with their family and friends. Usually, these videos are created before and/or after deployment. The category "soldiers at their military base" comprises videos shot at bases all over the world --except those produced in theaters of war, specifically Iraq and Afghanistan. The videos are produced during basic training and capture their introduction to this new contact zone. "Soldiers in the battlefield" refers to videos produced –-and usually uploaded- in both Iraq and Afghanistan, inside and outside the military bases.

Finally, I will also examine music mash-ups. In this section, I will briefly discuss the role of music in the military, from the configuration of a *cancionero* popular, or folk song book, in Puerto Rico during World War I, World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, to the case study of Juan 'Nuro' Cotto. Nuro is a hip-hop/rap artist who composes, produces, and distributes his own music from the battlefield. Here, I will explore the position of soldiers as "prod-users," where their roles traverse the usual economic categories of

consumer and producer --in other words, the user acts as a hybrid user/producer, or a prod-user. The products created are unfinished. They are not oriented towards the creation of a canonical final version. The last fact is important in the sense that the result of the prod-user will be framed within the iterative, evolutionary, and palimpsestic processes that underlie prod-usage as a constant, temporary stage of development which is liable to be replaced by an updated revision at any time (Brunss, 2007).

Going further into collaborative and continuously elaborated projects, I will explore the video-documentary *Jeans Cruz Story*. The clip tells the story of a Puerto Rican soldier from South Bronx, New York, who helped capture Saddam Hussein. My focus will be on the assembly of the video around Cruz's story. The video utilizes UGC platform Vimeo for developing what Lawrence Lessing (in O'Rielly, 2005) calls "a different kind of filmmaking," which is made possible by cheap digital labor and low cost, easy access to relatively sophisticated tools. I will pay special attention to the ways in which Cruz's story emerged simultaneously with José Padilla's, also known as "El Taliban Boricua," or "the Puerto Rican Taliban". The two stories, one of the capture of Saddam Hussein, the other of the conviction of Padilla, also known as Abdullah al-Muhajir or Muhajir Abdullah, for aiding terrorists, came out almost in the same news period. I propose examining how Cruz's image as an unrecognized, failed hero dialogues with Padilla's, as a "natural born terrorist". (Negrón-Muntaner, 2007)

To gather pertinent videos on UGC platforms, I used the website's own search engine capabilities. However, in order to generate them, I needed to play with the use of keywords[83]. Combining terms (in both, English and Spanish) such as "Puerto Rican," "Boricua," "Servicemen," "Servicewomen," "Iraq and Afghanistan," and "U.S. Military," among others, generated a considerable number of hits. Once I had generated a number of possible videos, I used YouTube and Vimeo suggestions to cull my set towards the

most pertinent categories. In addition to the videos, I also looked at channels, examining - the YouTube profile, which contains categories for "Views" and "About Me". However, the videos were the main focus of my observation. If it is true that YouTube has SNS-like features, where building profiles and friending are made possible and easy, the video content itself becomes the main communication vehicle and the main social-clustering indicator (Burgess & Green, 2009).

I was aware of the challenges that a UGC entails as an "unstable object of study, marked by dynamic change (in terms of videos and organization), a diversity of content (which moves with a different rhythm to television, but likewise flows through and often disappears from, the service), and a similar quotidian frequency, or "everydayness'" (Burgess and Green, 2009, p.6). I was also aware that an isolated ethnographic approach would not give me the whole picture regarding articulation of identities that I was interested in. As with my work on the SNS pages, I conducted textual and critical discourse analysis of the UGC videos. With such a purpose in mind, transcriptions of some of the units of analysis observed were used to complete the current research stage. In particular, I used some of the song lyrics that accompanied the music videos I have explored. I will take into account the influences and implications of the remix culture from which the videos and their stylistic cues emerged. I paid particular attention to the sociocultural context of YouTube as it developed in tandem with the WoT. From the beginning the possibility of video in the battlezone, wielded by soldiers and unfiltered by officers, has been the cause for some contention. Even the proliferation of dancing/lip-synch videos has run into conflict with IP laws.

LIVE FROM/ARCHIVE ON/ YOUTUBE: THE WAR ON TERROR IN UGC

In 2002, during the early stages of WOT, YouTube was not even in the digital landscape. Those who experienced the 9-11 attacks through the media watched the television clips of it. However, a huge outpouring of comments about the tragic events flooded the Internet, appearing on news websites and the blogosphere, and producing an unfiltered, massified media event in its own right – as the onlookers no longer were selected and filtered by 'letters' in newspapers and magazines. Three years later, we started remembering the attacks by means of a new UGC platform: YouTube. Hundreds of videos replayed the 9-11 attacks.

According to van Dijk (2009) YouTube's history is fairly recent. The author summarizes it in a nutshell:

> Started as a video-sharing site in 2005 and run by three students from a Silicon Valley garage, the financially flailing but hugely popular site was bought up by Google in October of 2006 for the unprecedented sum of $1.6 billion […] In less than a year, YouTube became an (independent) subsidiary of a commercial firm whose core interest is not in content per se, but in the vertical integration of search engines with content, social networking and advertising (p. 42).

Burgees and Green (2009) mention the three myths that cluster around YouTube's origin and rise. The first one traces the beginning of the buzz around YouTube to an article published on August of 2005 on a technology-business blog, TechCrunch. The article described the architecture of the website and listed it as a site to watch. A second myth gives an account of how four key features in the YouTube platform were implemented: a) video recommendations; b) video sharing; c) comments; and d) an embeddable video player. The third myth concerns YouTube's viral capacity as endusers began to use their ability to upload, download and link to make YouTube videos 'sendable'. Particularly, a viral distribution of a satirical sketch on Saturday Night Live (SNL) titled "Lazy Sunday"[84] was uploaded on December, 2005, and viewed 1.2 million times within the

first ten days. The achievement of more than a million viewings marked YouTube's entrance into one of the key sites not only on the Internet, but in a mainstream medium. Still, there is no doubt that, however one accounts for YouTube's origin and rise, the key to its success was the radical simplicity of its design.

Interfaces are defined by the tensions that emerge in a design that tries to satisfy two different and competing design imperatives: usability and hackability (Burgess & Green, 2009). A website's hackability measures its vulnerability to outside modification or alteration that is neither intended nor desired by its owner. Usability, however, requires that the web site be accessible to non-specialist end users, thus opening the site to potential attack. Initially, out of the SNS/UGCs available, only MySpace promoted hackability, allowing their users to alter and play with its design. However, with the advent of Facebook, control over the Web markup language reverted back to the central designers of the SNS, changing the balance of the designer ideology back to the central control/peripheral usability pattern. YouTube's design focused on usability, a simple and limited set of features permitting video uploads (after which, media software companies like Real Player developed means of downloading videos), along with a number of interesting and innovative features that allowed for playlists, customizing one's site as a 'channel', commenting, and linking. The interface itself did not incorporate sophisticated design features, but it was highly usable. The website's objectives and uses are available at a simple glance: uploading, transcoding, tagging, recommending, and commenting on videos. On top of this storage base, YouTube included many SNSs design components.

The key to YouTube is that its users provide its content. YouTube does not go out itself and create it. In order to be viable, the site had to induce people to upload content and to come and see the content. Besides involving tricky IP issues, this involves making the site's content providers its marketers as well. Thus, anyone has the option of creating

their own account [under pseudonym, if they chose] or –after Google bought the company - of linking their Google account in order to create a profile. Profiles or accounts work in a similar way as in MySpace or Facebook. For example, a user can create a friend or fan network for their channel. According to Burgees and Green (2009), through the many activities available on YouTube--uploading, viewing, discussing, and collaborating--the UGC community conforms to the definition of a creative practice network. However, they also argue "Amateurs are represented as individualistic, self-expressive producers, who are mainly interested in broadcasting themselves, rather than engaging in textual productivity as means to participation in social networks" (p. 30). YouTube, fortuitously, offered just the kind of features that made it a highly attractive platform for participants in the WOT looking to express themselves, and in so doing made itself a necessary reference for understanding the WOT culture. It became not only a preferred space for telling stories about/and from the WOT, and thus intervening in it. For instance, considering flagging as inappropriate and/or censoring some conspiracy theory videos that emerged after 9-11.

Anne Marie Cox (Cox, 2006) succinctly framed the WOT within the emergence of digital/social media when she states:

> Just as Vietnam had been America's first "living-room war," spilling carnage in dinnertime news broadcasts, so is the Iraq conflict emerging as the first YouTube war. Growing up in a world where they can swap MP3s as well as intimate details about their lives via MySpace or Facebook, American soldiers are swapping their Iraq experience as well (Cox, 2006).

In fact, YouTube became a preferred space for ideology and myth production and reproduction regarding U.S. participation in the WOT, as it gave those with views that could not penetrate the mainstream media the tools to make viscerally attractive cases for themselves outside that media. On March 7, 2007, the United States Department of

Defense (DOD) created a channel on YouTube with the title as "Multi-National Force – Iraq (MNFIRAQ)"[85]. The channel hosts a series of short clips shot by U.S. forces in Iraq. According to the description of the channel:

> The Multi-National Force - Iraq YouTube channel gives viewers around the world a "boots on the ground" perspective of Operation Iraqi Freedom from those who are most closely involved. Video clips document action as it appeared to personnel on scene as it was shot. We will only edit video clips for time, security reasons, and/or overly disturbing or offensive images[86].

The program of promoting servicemen and women as prod-users provided an aura of legitimacy to the channel.

Christensen (2008) did a comprehensive research on the uses of YouTube by the U.S. military, particularly the creation of MNFIRAQ. He argues that the channel was created in order to present U.S. forces serving in the WOT in a positive light, highlighting a series of clips that showed troops engaged in a number of pro-social activities in the Middle East, in contrast to the images of fighting and of such incidents as the Abu Ghraib tortures that have impressed themselves on the public. Yet, in an ironic twist, those servicemen and women who participated in the videos were banned from watching them. On May 2007, the DOD made another announcement regarding UGCs: U.S. forces serving in Iraq and Afghanistan would no longer have access to these sites on government computers. The justification for the ban was that UGCs consumes too much bandwidth. However, the author pointed out that the bandwidth justification strategically coincides with the creation of the MNFIRAQ as an alternative pro-war channel. He identifies the channel's propagandistic approach:

> The MNFIRAQ channel could be seen as an effort by the US Defense Department to counterbalance the avalanche of video clips up- loaded to YouTube, Google Video and other sites depicting anti-social – and sometimes illegal – activities engaged in by US and coalition military forces in Iraq. Interestingly, many of the

> most disturbing clips were shot by military personnel themselves, and not by anti-war activists or Iraqi citizens. (p. 156).

However, while the general content of MNFIRAQ videos adheres to traditional norms of propaganda, the military cannot control counter-images. YouTube's decentralized nature makes the level of control much more challenging. This is evident by the fact that the U.S. military could not even stop its own troops from uploading clips, often adding violent and disturbing alternative images to the ones officially released by the DOD. In turn, these clips appear side by side with MNFIRAQ clips when searching the YouTube system, thus creating what Chistiansen (REFERENCE) refers to as "propagandistic dissonance". These are moments when propagandistic material is placed vis-à-vis material that renders such propaganda impotent. For example, the shocking images of U.S. soldiers throwing puppies off a cliff (Donaldson-Evans, 2008). One of the hazards of creating a site in which the users are the content providers is that it negates the kind of censorship that would, in the past, have been able to neutralize the proliferation of these images, and stifle the growing debate about them.

With some exaggeration, this is why experts have described the WOT as "the YouTube War" (Cox, 2006; (Cohen, 2010; Terry, 2007), because the mainstream media through which people, in the past, have received information on the war, is now in competition with platforms that allow for much rawer and alternative versions of the war. This has, in turn, generated verbal and legal wars about network censorship and bandwidth control. However, Christensen argues that terms such as "the YouTube War" tend to deflect attention away not only from the harsh political and economic implications of the WOT, but also from the number of victims produced by these conflicts, whose deaths and injuries are far from "virtual". This is not to dissociate YouTube, where the virtual and the offline undoubtedly interact, from the WOT's

mundane and everyday setting. The many instances of unofficial videos of wartime occurrences surfacing on the Net – and inevitably finding their way to YouTube - have sparked significant debates on the WOT's public image and on soldier performance in the battlefield. For this reason, it is imperative to discuss the proliferation of dancing/lip-synch videos by soldiers in the battlefield and the ways in which these videos have mainstreamed soldiers' UGC use into the public eye.

DANCE PARTY IN IRAQ: STARRING YOU

In the development of the WOT, there's been a noticeable rise in dancing and lip-synch videos made by the soldiers between 2010 and 2011. These videos became a viral sensation not only in the online realm, with hundreds of thousands of views, but also were widely discussed in the national press and TV (O'connor, 2010). Primetime television programs have dedicated whole segments to the discussion of such videos. Points of view varied from creative and "cute" productions to the controversy of knowing that or armed forces, financed by civilian society, has been wasting their time in such idle feats. One of the most popular videos was released in 2010, when soldiers from the 82nd Airborne remade Lady Gaga's hit single "Telephone". The video had a wide media repercussion because it features scenes in which soldiers clearly violate the military's "Don't ask, Don't Tell" (DADT) policy, ongoing at the time the videos were broadcasted.

DADT was the official U.S. policy on military personnel from December 21, 1993 to September 20, 2011, and prohibited military staff from discriminating against or harassing closeted homosexual or bisexual service members or applicants, while barring openly gay, lesbian, or bisexual persons from military service. The interesting angle is that the videos generated numerous debates on DADT and hate crimes. For example,

LGBT blog author and scholar Alex Cho (2010) interestingly analyzes anxiety making threats aimed at LGBT subjects as a result from video proliferation:

> I am going to assert that hate crimes are committed against queers--and particularly against transgender people--because of the very same anxiety that makes us want to laugh at straight boys acting like girls…. It is the same anxiety. It is the same violence. To be empowered means you can make silly YouTube videos and laugh it off. To be divested of power means you get stabbed.

Cho's blog post also triggered fascinating debates on the video's possible ulterior motives, implications of sexual identity policies in the military, or if the video was either merely funny or actually constituted gender violence. Cheslik-DeMeyer (2010) reacted to Cho's blog with another post on which he both aggress and disagrees with the blogger:

> I agree with his basic argument, that the anxiety that makes people laugh at army guys acting like women is the same anxiety that makes someone carve "IT" on the chest of a transgender man…But my fear is that, if we look at the YouTube parody only through that lens, we're in danger of doing the same kind of symbolic violence to these men (the soldiers who made this video), to their histories, to their ambiguous and complicated relationship to their own sexuality, the same kind of violence that Alex Cho is saying they do to us in this video.

Since the debates regarding the telephone video, other improvised productions emerged from the YouTube landscape. Parodies of Britney Spears', "Hold it Against Me," Beyonce's "Single Ladies," and popular songs like "Peanut Butter Jelly Time,"were some of the other titles that became hits on YouTube. If it is true that this kind of video may be analyzed from different angles, my interest is in the way in which the videos portray a new cultural climate in the military as a more fluid space.

Such fluency allows movement from an official discourse to an unofficial one arbitrarily. For instance, Maureen O'connor (O'connor, 2010), argues that "the joy of dancing in a group is not unlike the pride of marching in step with your peers: a physical celebration of group unity".[87] I contend that these choreographies comprise a self-conscious rupture from strict military formations: one more way for exposing--and

eroticizing--the unharmed body that has survived (so far) the improvised explosive devices, abundant in the Middle East battlefield. Taddeo (Taddeo, 2010) describes that the emergence of dancing videos reveals a new cultural kind of soldier:

These videos are revealing a new breed of soldier: rebellious, witty, rabid consumers of pop culture, thousands of miles from home but able to Skype daily with family and friends. They are as plugged in as lab rats. When they are not on patrol, they live on the web. They are there and here at once. In Iraq, there are long, stretching days and lonely nights when the guys don't come out of their rooms unless the Internet is down…But the making of the video was a reason to come outside, to wield glow sticks, to show off their gym bodies, to have fun[88].

The videos also question U.S. military presence in the Middle East. More than mere value judgments by civil society, the presence is questioned, on the surface level, by this use of taxpayer money: financing a war in which soldiers dedicate their time to mounting choreographies and uploading them in UGC cyberspace. However, after interviewing more than two dozen Vietnam veterans, one realizes that their daily activities are not far from the mundane and trivial WOT choreographies. It is important to acknowledge the cultural atmosphere in which today's soldiers, who grew up with mash-ups, are embedded and identify with. The UGC space may expand the technological opportunity for self-expression, but it is, finally, merely a participant in the environment defined by Lawrence Lessing (2006), as we noted in our introduction to this chapter, as remix culture, which lives by creating mash-up identities. It is to these I now turn.

MASH-UP IDENTITIES IN REMIX CULTURE

For my Senior Prom in 1998, the guest band was artist Don Chezina, who specialized in an increasingly popular style named reggaeton.[89] The genre grew out of the local, so called "underground" rap scene, by its public housing fans. During the show, Don Chezina went from hip-hop to reggaeton, responding both to requests and, as well, to the program he had chosen for the night, which was heavily mash-up in nature. The tracks were within the bounds of a genre that not only invited audience interaction, but also relied on their musical sophistication by the use of well-known beats that functioned connotatively, linking songs in performance to a background repertoire of popular culture music.

During the presentation, one of my high school mates gave Don Chezina a song track. The performer invited my friend to the stage so that he could improvise, thus adding one more song to the repertoire set for the prom. The show ended with his hit, "Tra Tra Tra" (a track in which the only lyrics are repeating "tra tra tra" constantly) on my friend's track, with Don Chezina's improvised lyrics. Ten years later, a cartoon video presenting a hippopotamus dancing to "Tra Tra Tra" became a sensation on YouTube.[90] How can a request by high school students at a senior prom live presentation lead to a YouTube hit comprising a cartoon with a dancing hippo? This anecdote, which I take out of my own experience, is a clue that will help me follow the multitudinous inputs and connections that flow into remix-culture products, and that create identity in the mash-up generation of prod-users.

The remix culture thesis claims that the media-sphere is no longer vertical, with actors and organizations at the top creating the cultural products that flow down. The audience has itself become the producer, and products now flow up or down on a number of platforms. This paradigm shift in production and consumption creates a participatory

environment that breaks down the boundaries that created a vertical structure between producers and consumers, and instead changes the terms of production: the potential for participation and the use of cultural products in the bricolage of mash up activity puts both users and producers of information and knowledge in a new position. This shift should not be idealized: that the cost of production and distribution is now born by the prod-user, while the profit, on a platform like YouTube, goes to the corporation points to the way democratization can easily be assimilated by corporate culture. However, the formation of the hybrid role of prod-user is a social fact, and it does change, completely, the traditional distinction between production and consumption, or making and using (Bruns, 2008). The figure of the prod-user is a key protagonist of the remix culture.

The emergence of a remix culture correlates to the rise of new digital/social media, for example, open-source software, inexpensive digital cameras, easy-to-use editing tools, affordable access to network environments, and platforms like SNS and UGC. All of these have made it easier for a mass audience of consumers to acquire, store, reuse, remix, and circulate existing material. The lean towards user-friendly design, and away from security (both hacking and the securing of intellectual property rights by monopoly entertainment companies), has resulted in a creative surge. Yet creativity here is not a matter of "newness" – abolishing one of the great canons of modernist aesthetics – for in a remix-culture context, as Lawrence Lessig (2004) argues:

> The point is…[that] culture itself is, and has always been, remix. The point instead is that this remix potential is now amplified by technology…now a wide range of citizens have the opportunity to engage in this form of speech, and to share the product of that speech with others, using digital technologies (p. 965).

Novelty is combinatorial, not natural or spontaneous. And one of the forms of speech that Lessig is talking about is clearly the mash-up.

O'Brien and Fitzgerald (2006) define a mash-up as an audio-visual remix--commonly a video or website--that combines content from a number of different sources to produce something new. Serazio (2008) states that mash-ups happen in response to larger technological, institutional, and social contexts. He states that "For the mash-up to proliferate, two key technological developments were necessary: an abundance of available source material, which, by the late 1990s, had amassed on the Internet, and cheaper music software that facilitated the deconstruction and reconstruction of songs". (Serazio, 2008, p. 81) It is here that the intersection between developments in the music industry and on the Internet converged in the mash-up style as a dominant cultural style and means of production. The term "mash-up" was commonly used in the music industry to refer to a song or compilation created by blending seamlessly two or more songs, the trick of which was both aesthetic and legal, as the use of songs and tunes was determined, in part, by the "fair use" doctrine of copyright law (Plaza, 2010). Fair use gives scholars, researchers, authors, and artists permission to make limited use of copyrighted work without asking permission. If the work that makes use of copyrighted material is considered "transformative," then fair use is more likely to be applicable. Typical instances of transformative work are comment and criticism, news reporting and research, and scholarship.

One example of a mash-up is DJ Earworm's remixes. Since 2007, Earworm, a graduate in Computer Science and Music Theory from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, has been compiling tracks from Billboard's Top 25 in one comprehensive track that usually is no longer than six minutes. However, these mash-ups do not enter the media alone. While music can be uploaded and downloaded as mp3 files, on YouTube, there is always a visual component to them. This generally comes in the form of a video mash-up.

A video mash-up is the combination of multiple video sources, usually unrelated. One very common kind of mash-up video are humorous movie trailer parodies (i.e. the horror version of *Mary Poppins*, known as *Scary Mary*)[91] or potential movie-sequel trailers (i. e. a sequel of *Titanic*, known as *Titanic: To The Surface*)[92]. These videos have generated great interest among a large audience, at times creating confusion between followers of popular culture and the media. Some of them have survived fair-use treatment, while others were judged to encroach on fair-use by YouTube, which removed them from the UGCs. However, given the vast number of uploads that are made every day, there is always a user trying to find a way to get another fair use violation by the censors (often not knowing that it has been judged a violation). In addition to video mash-ups, there are also a variety of website mash-ups available on the Internet. A website mash-up can take live content from one online source, such as traffic data, and mix it with an online map to produce real time traffic updates available on virtual maps (O'Brien & Fitzgerald, 2006).

For the purpose of the present dissertation, I am interested in using the concept of "mash-up" in a cultural-environment sense. Serazio (2008) talks about "generation mash-up" to describe individuals born between the 80s and 90s who employ the tools of digital/social media platforms and (i.e. MySpace, Facebook, YouTube and Blogspot) and technologies (i.e., laptop computers, iPhones, iPads, and software like Photoshop, iMovie, etc) to articulate their identities in terms of their media saturated environment. We have a generation that, according to O'Reilly (2005), is so embedded in the digital landscape and influenced by the rhetoric of Web 2.0 that they have absorbed the cultural styles of their time, emphasizing flexibility, interactivity, non-linearity, exhibitionism, convergence, user-centrality, hierarchy-flattening, and most importantly, self-entitlement. Anastasia Goodstein, publisher of Ypulse.com,,[93] defines mash-up culture as "taking bits

and pieces of elements of popular culture and then remixing them. It is, in a sense, a way to create one's own subculture" (Conroy, 2009). Serazio (2008) adds that mash-up is an exercise of irreverence made possible by technology. My argument, in line with these observers, is that, in the exercise of mashing-up identities, there are instances of irreverence that allow implicit articulation, re-articulation, deconstruction and reconstruction of identities otherwise caught in various hierarchies over which they have limited or no control. By applying the mash-up style, these consumers and producers of the omnipresent media environment create new groupings, new in groups, new links and contacts, inaugurating new rituals of belonging and cultural citizenship.

Hermes (2005) defines cultural citizenship as the community building and reflection process that occurs as a result of text-related practices such as reading, consuming, celebrating, and criticizing, such as those offered in the realm of popular culture. This is possible in an environment like UGCs because, as Uricchio (2004) proposes in his model for cultural citizenship, spaces like YouTube are "freed from any necessary relationship to the nation-state, and [include] participation, in the sense of active…participatory culture" (p. 148). From my observation of the use of UGCs by Puerto Rican soldiers over time, I contend that they form an alternative citizenship model that compensates for the second-class citizenship under which Puerto Rican soldiers have suffered since they were added to the military in 1917. In what follows, I will discuss how music in the battlefield, particularly the role of a prod-user, enables the articulation of cultural citizenship.

MUSIC FROM THE BATTLEFIELD: PROD-USERS AND CURATORS

Preceding the act of including Puerto Ricans in the armed forces in 1917, Congress passed the Jones Act,[94] which granted Puerto Ricans citizenship, making way for the military draft in the island. War, then, was at the very root of Puerto Rico's status with relation to the U.S., and war has since been a recurrent topic in Puerto Rico's popular repertoire. As a strategy for stimulating Puerto Rican youths' integration into the Army, a music contest was celebrated in the island at this time, in which a martial hymn was chosen which would stimulate warrior values among the civil population, and also to promote enlistment for the force being levied to be sent to the European theater. Although neither the composer nor the song have been rescued from by the oral record, the runner-up is remembered: "Canción del soldado" [soldier's song], by Eustaquio Pujals, from Ponce. The lyrics exhorted Puerto Ricans to fight for their "beloved homeland, Borinquen" ["patria querida, Borinquen"] in France.

World War I merely paved the way for the vastly expanded mobilization of World War II. This conflict inspired many more songs composed by local authors, to accompany the drafting of 65,000 Puerto Rico-born soldiers. The song that achieved the most popularity was "Despedida" ["farewell"] by Pedro Flores, which such a success that it became the favorite track at farewell parties for soldiers on their day of departure. According to journalist Josean Ramos (2006), the motifs of World Ward II songs, whatever their style, were clustered around such topics as the patriotic duty to serve the "empire," chauvinist craftiness, a loved one left behind, and an absent mother's pain. Some tracks spoke out against the war. For example, Roberto Cole's track, interpreted by José Luis Moneró, "A la guerra yo no voy" ["I'm not goint to the war"], breaks aways from the patriotic idealism in other songs, proclaiming the narrator's lack of interest and contempt for the war:

> A la guerra yo no voy, no quiero mi cuerpo pa tambor. Si Alemania lo formó, mira a ver que culpa tengo yo. . . [16]

In a similar vein, in the fifties, singer-songwriter Bobby Capó wrote "No son cobardes" ["they are not cowards"], whose lyrics intended to do musical justice to the member of the famous 65th Infantry Regiment, unfairly convicted by military courts after serving in Korea:

> La Patria se quebranta ante la pena y la injusticia, que comete un prejuiciado tribunal. Hoy dicen (las madres) que prefieren verlos muertos, a manchados en su honor en una cárcel militar. . . [17]

By the Vietman War, musical compositions reflected the antiwar sentiment of the counter-culture, thus adding themselves to the protest.

The relationship between the intersection of music and the military has been widely researched by numbers of scholars in popular culture and history. Some have explored the peculiar fertility of the song culture in World War II (Jones, 2006); others focus in the discography of the Vietnam Era (Andersen, 2000); while others tackle the role of country music during World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam, the Cold War, September 11, and the two conflicts in the Persian Gulf (Wolfe & Akenson, 2008). However, very few have yet explored the changes in the song culture/war interface since the insertion of digital/social media technology into the battlefield.

One of the first to do so is Johnathan R. Pieslak (2009), who has looked at the role music plays in U.S. soldiers serving in the WOT. His study revealed that many enlisted rank soldiers use music for a variety of reasons that range from personal enjoyment, remembrance of loved ones, entertainment, to heightening aggressiveness and/or a channeling their feelings about wartime experiences. This generation of soldiers has

[16] Literally: I'm not going to the war; I don´t want my body to become a drum. If Germany started it, how is that my fault?

[17] Literally: Today the homeland breaks before the pain and injustice committed by a biased court. Today (their mothers) say they rather see them dead than seeing their honor tainted in a military jail.

access to music through different machines and platforms, such as CD players, iPods, mp3 players, iPhones, or even laptop computers. As mentioned in Chapter Two, SNSs have also become a space for displaying music videos, creating soundtracks about their war experiences. Pieslak acknowledges that the interaction between the soldiers and music depends on many layers of identity, such as ethnicity, geographic background, military branch, age, gender, and social class. However, his case studies focus more on the ideological element in heavy metal and rap, rather than on exploring the afore-mentioned layers of identity and their force in shaping and being shaped by the use and production of music about battlefield experience. It is precisely in this sense that I would like to add my contribution to the thematic of music and the military, by studying the way in which Puerto Rican soldiers participating in the WOT use UGCs in order to act not only as original content prod-users, but also as Puerto Rican pop music curators.

Jibaros in the Battlezone

The video clip showing eight Puerto Rican soldiers playing *pleneras*[95] at a military base was among the first of the videos I came across when I started my search on YouTube. Titled "Boricua Soldiers,"[96] the clip lasts barely fifteen seconds, was not edited in any way, and presented a brief interpretation of an improvised *plena*. As I write this, I notice that it has more than two thousand hits. The first question that occurred to me was the relevance of *plena* music to the battlefield – what meaning does it have for soldiers, there, that it might not have for civilians? And what would motivate this group of soldiers – or at least one among them - to upload this short and rudimentary video to UGC networks? The answers may reside in the origin of *plena* music as a music genre autochthonous to Puerto Rico.

Plena music is often called a *periódico cantado*, or sung newspaper, and at one time plenas were popular among the working class because, aside from their musical touches, they disseminated the news. According to Francis R. Aparico (1998) the *plena*, in the early twentieth century, was known as the *música de negros*, "black music", as its audience and creators were predominantly Afro-Puerto Rican. Since then, the audience has widened, and the *plena* is played throughout Puerto Rico, especially during special occasions such as the Holiday season, and as a musical backdrop for civic protests, which is a legacy of its traditional use as a vehicle for social commentary. Whenever *plena* is played, the audience joins in the singing, clapping, and dancing. In the same way, *plena* emerges as public performance spontaneously in most occasions. The fact that the instruments--*panderos, clave, güiro, maracas*--are small and easy to play allows easy transport.

Given this background, we can make stronger guesses about what these Puerto Rican soldiers were doing. They are serving in a space that is at once patrolled and controlled by the military, but subject to deadly interruptions of routine. Surely, playing *plena* music challenges the official discourse and provides a space where the genre's typical rejoicing and spontaneity challenge the military's solemnity and routine. As a musical newscast, playing *plena* at the military camp provides an alternate news source for its listeners, and for those who view the video on YouTube. The piece musically marks the military space, and social commentary may merely be a search for knowledge by a group of ethnonational subjects cohabiting in a contact zone that is infused with the heavy metal, rap, and country music so popular among soldiers. At such a juncture, Puerto Rican pop music distribution through UGC networks becomes particularly relevant.

User “pooldude41” uses UGC spaces for storing and distributing his interpretations of Puerto Rican popular music. His most viewed videos portray him playing the Puerto Rican *cuatro*. A lute-like sting instrument, the *cuatro* is considered Puerto Rico’s national instrument. The first video is titled "Musica Jibara en Afghanistan Mazurca (Aurora)"[97]. In the video, the soldier is playing the instrument, wearing his military uniform and sitting down on his bed, in what it seems to be one of the barracks. He is playing a mazurka, “Aurora,” composed by Ladislao Martínez (circa 1932). The title “musica jibara”, presents the musician as a representative of the average Puerto Rican at his or her purest; the jibaro is the image of working, struggling, untiring, and honest men and women, usually in opposition to the idealized colonial subject, who is racialized by the U.S. system. One of the most interesting properties of pooldude41’s channel is the abundance of comments, specially about the way he configures an imagined community from an interest in popular music. One user comment says:

> elgallojy6 eres un pedacito de Puerto Rico. Espero que puedas compartir con esas pobres gente que nesecita de alguien que los estime en esa crisis que tienen. Que tu musica los aliente. Compártela_y veras.[18]

In this comment, the user is making the music or the musician into a metonymy for Puerto Rico. As mentioned before, both music and gastronomy are among the cultural product inventory that embodies the idea of belonging to the Puerto Rican imagined community. In this example, the idea is that the video is not just of an amateur performance, but a performance that is shared, and thus becomes an object of belonging for the community of listeners and viewers. The displacement of this “small piece of Puerto Rico” to the battlezone makes the soldier into a sort of ambassador for Puerto

[18] elgallojy6: You are a small piece of Puerto Rico. I hope you are able to share [this music] with that poor people, who needs somebody’s high esteem during the crisis they live in. Let music encourage them. Share it, and you’ll see.

Rican cultural products – sharing those products with those on the other side of the line, the "poor people" of the Middle East and Central Asia. Other users reify the role of the popular music in creating a community:

> # RAtutubo Saludos y que Dios te ilumine y te proteja por alla. Soy_retirado de el Army Reserve y servi en el 2003 cuando comenzo todo escoltando los buques hasta Kuwait. Llevamos una caja especial que contenia *cuatro*, guitarra, guiro y maracas. Alla construimos unos bongo de madera. La musica fue nuestra terapia, cuando teniamos la oportunidad todos se convertian en musicos y cantantes. Te felicito por cargar ese *Cuatro* contigo y compartir tu talento por alla. [19]

The comment works on several cultural and political semantic levels. One of those levels is geo-political: the level of the American military presence in the Middle East. This level is de-politicized, accepted as a given. The second level is the military itself, in which Puerto Rican soldiers are embedded and tacitly threatened with either assimilation or discrimination. The third level is the Puerto Rican military community itself, extended over time. That third level is where the action is: as we can see, Puerto Rico's imagined community is successful in reproducing itself by way of the musical instruments it carries and the music that is disseminated by the soldier-musicians. And finally, the last level is one that did not exist in 2003 – the level of the UGCs. Music here is treated under the liberal trope of a cultural object that bridges cultures, to the extent of turning us into musicians and singers, a talent understood as innate due to Puerto Ricanness. Another comment suggests forming a community of followers through music:

> # WAFPIONEER Gracias. No, sabia que habias hecho otro video. Muy buena la musica. Gracias por servir a la patria. Yo soy retirada de Fuerzas Aereas y me da mucha alegria de los boricuas que sirven en todas partes del mundo. Representan

[19] #RAtutubo: Greetings, and may God illuminate and protect you over there. I am U.S. Army Reserve, retired, and I served in 2003, when everything started, escorting ships to Kwait. We had a special box containing a *cuatro*, a guitar, a *guiro*, and maracas. We also built wooden bongos over there. Music was our therapy; whenever we had the chance, everyone became musicians and singers. I congratulate you for carrying that *cuatro* with you, and for sharing your talent over there.

> a USA muy bien. Gracias y para adelante donde quiera que esten. God Bless our brave warriors![20]

This comment, in contrast with a nationalistic–often exclusive--approach of Puerto Ricanness, highlights Puerto Rican soldiers as an integral part of the U.S. imagined community – thus, refocuses on the second level in #Ratutubo's comment. The military level, here, is equalized – there is no sign of the conflict between branches of the military that sometimes configure this level of discourse. Finally, the comment, while leaving aside the politics of the presence of the U.S. in the Middle East, does make a political statement with regard to the Puerto Rican relation to the U.S. – the Puerto Ricans 'represent' the U.S. The complexity of this representation turns around an unexamined but crucial idea: "serving the homeland". To which homeland does the user refer? We may infer it's the U.S., because the author later adds: "They represent the U.S. well". We see the possibility here of how commenting of UGC networks provides a space for a number of distinct viewpoints, some challenging the idea of the U.S. as a colonial power, others embracing it as Puerto Rico's country. Both views, however, find the representation of the music on YouTube heartening.

Another video produced by pooldude41 was titled "Musica Jibara en Afghanistan"[98]. In the clip, the soldier is interpreting a "Seis con Decima". A *decima* is another musical expression commonly associated with the Puerto Rican peasantry, and the *seis* is a rhythm within the *cuatro* inherited from Spain. [99] In the video, he is accompanied by two other men in civil clothing –-presumably Puerto Rican civil contractors. One of them is playing what seems to be an Afghan percussion instrument very similar to the Puerto Rican instrument *plenera*, or *plena* tambourine. Using the

[20] #WAFPIONEER: Thanks. No, I didn't know you made another video. Very good music. Thanks for serving the homeland. I am a woman retired from the Armed Forces, and I am glad Puerto Ricans are serving all over the world. They represent the U.S. very well. Than you, and keep it up wherever you are. God bless our brave warriors!

instrument leads us to think about how Afghan cultural elements and a Puerto Rican cultural manifestation can be, as it were, hybridized. One user comment ignores the element of mixture to speak of nostalgia:

> # ojodeaguila55 Jose, soy yo tu hermano, Angelo. La verdad es que cuando uno esta lejos de Puerto Rico siempre hay nostalgia y mas cuando se trata de nuestra propia musica. Nunca la dejes de tocar que es un orgullo saber que sigue la tradicion. Cuidate mucho. [21]

Nostalgia works here as an emotional support for broken memories about Puerto Rico. In this regard, nostalgia refers to the fear of being alienated and alien. Music embodies the longing for home, but its condition is a distance from home, which threatens to make home a distant memory. The ways in which Puerto Rico is configured as a unique space in order to articulate a connection to the homeland is crucial to my analysis. In this sense, home becomes a space configured musically. But the fourth semantic level, the level of the UGC, can operate here either unobtrusively, as a sort of background that simply and directly offers this music, or the UGC can mark itself in the video. In either case, there is the sense of transferring homeland cultural materials from one place to another, without a real physical transfer.

Another user comments:

> Wannaplaycuatro Que orgullo ver como llevan nuestra musica a todos los rincones! Es una alegria ver como conservan la tradicion. Gracias por sus sacrificios y que vuelvan pronto a sus hogares, feliz 2008![22]

This comment suggests that the soldier – whose job is to sacrifice – has, as well, taken on another role, carrying Puerto Rican music with him – both into Afghanistan and into

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[21]# ojodeaguila55: José, it's me, your brother Angelo. The truth that when one is away from Puerto Rico, there's always nostalgia, and even more when regarding our music. Never stop playing; it's an honor to know the tradition lives on. Take care.

[22] Wannaplaycuatro: What an honor it is to see how you take our music everywhere! It's such a joy to see how you preserve our tradition. Thank you for your sacrifices, and may you return to your homes soon. Happy 2008!

YouTube. In this comment, as well, the political semantics of YouTube are underdetermined or forgotten, and the overt message of the video is the focus. From this point of view, YouTube is providing not a business that allows for content providers, but a digital archive--a space for safeguarding and preserving such musical expressions.

Gehl (2007) argues that YouTube is an archive because a) it is composed of central servers which hold the video content that users have uploaded; b) is not a broadcaster, it does not produce any content of its own but content provided by third parties, and c) it sheds light on labor and the role of the object in a collection. In channels similar to pooldude41's, one can clearly observe how the audience for popular music uses that music, archives it, links it to occasions, much as, in a movie, the director will score scenes to the score. It is both a symbol of the scene and an emotional factor within the scene. This is an especially poignant habit when transferred to the battlefield. Placing videos in a digital archive, however, provides different ways of reading them. Gehls adds that "In an archive, the object's original exchange value is often altered, creating possibilities for different exchanges". (p. 5). In such scenarios, what seems to be a group of daily-life videos containing Puerto Rican popular music, improvised interpretations produced at the battlefield become an archive that may be shared and interacted with, evoking reactions from, for instance, other soldiers from other fronts and times. It is at this space where a cultural citizenship on which a revived model of the public sphere is created, based on the promotion of sustained opportunities for participation and dialogue and on the creation of spaces for engagement and community formation (Burgess and Green, 2009).

Nevertheless, some theorists argue that the presence of a curator is requisite to the definition of an archive. On its simplest term, a curator is the person/s in charge of an archive. The curator's role is to organize a space according to some institutional or

subjective format, which lends to the collection of artifacts the appearance of a pattern, genre, or type. According to Ghels (2007), the duties of a curator are: a) acceptance (accessioning) of objects; b) proper storage of objects; c) categorization of objects; d) display of objects; and e) legal disposal of objects. YouTube's nature is inherently anti-curatorial in as much as the platform exists to be uploaded to by content providers. Burgess and Green (2009) opine that YouTube is a profoundly disordered and accidental archive that calls for the active role of curators. In actuality, YouTube does cull (rejecting IP violations, and violations of certain rules of decorum), and by providing fixed formats for linking and creating channels, as well as an algorithm suggesting similar videos, it does 'guide' the viewer.

Given these facts, does it make sense to speak of any one or any institution curating the videos produced by Puerto Rican Soldiers? The truth is that most videos are independent units created by a person or persons, uploaded to the net, and spread around SNSs. True, there is naturally a lot of imitation – a certain kind of video might lead to a fashion for its type. One dance and lip-synching video might lead to another. In my study, profile owners seem to serve, if not as full curators, at last as partial ones, because they are part of the video acceptance, storage, and display processes, and they have official responsibility for the videos vis-à-vis YouTube: YouTube will punish or warn the owner of an account for violations of rules that have to do with the display of the profile owner's videos, and not the profile owner's part in their content.

The PR-oduser in the Battlefield: The Case Study of Juan "Nuro" Cotto

It has been the case since the Homeric age that music has served a purpose on the battlefield. As mentioned before, throughout Puerto Rican participation in different

American wars, a popular oral songbook dedicated to war has gradually taken shape. The soldier composer appeared in World War I. Puerto Rican composers serving in the U.S. Army, like Aguadilla's Rafael Hernández,[100] used war scenarios within his songs. For example, the romantic track "Oui Madame" was inspired by a Hernández's army buddy, who fell in love with a French woman at a cabaret in France (2007). Almost a century later, and after six wars, the soldier composer lives on. Nevertheless, new war scenarios materializing in the Middle East, the WOT's unique circumstances, as well as new digital/social media have added both to the quantity and the topics of the Puerto Rican songbook; new aesthetics are included in music compositions, which have turned the soldier composer into a soldier prod-user.

Juan "Nuro" Cotto (also known as El cirujano, or the surgeon) is one of the most active soldier prod-users in UGC networks. Nuro, as he is known in the hip-hop/rap scene, is an active member of the U.S. Armed Forces, and served in the WOT. Born in Puerto Rico, Nuro migrated to Florida during the 1990s. I found out about Nuro during my participation at the Ford Fellows conference in 2008, when his aunt, ethnomusicologist Marisol Berríos Miranda, attended my presentation, intrigued by my research topic. At the end of my oral paper, she handed me a music CD with the work of her nephew Juan Carlos, as he is also known. I listened to it and immediately decided to feature this young artist in my research. Naturally, I googled him, and the first thing I found was his MySpace page. There, the singer not only shared his personal information and photo galleries, but also his experiences as a soldier during the WOT and as hip-hop/rap performer at "la escena," or scene, as the music venue where both genres converge is called in the island.

His position in this SNS makes sense if we consider that MySpace music services allow professional and amateur artists to disseminate their work by making it publicly

available for appropriation by other users, who will often simply copy the video to their own profile. In fact, Nuro had already recorded three albums in less than a year when I was first told about him. Based on the discography available online, one can argue that his role as a prod-user has been iterative, evolutionary, and palimpsestic, given the multiple and updated versions of some of his tracks. For example, he described some of his tracks as remade. Others included a revised version featuring another artist.

In an interview with the blog HipHopBoricua[101] (2009), Nuro indicated that, during his service in Afghanistan, he dedicated two hours, out of his five hours of sleep to writing music. He used songwriting to unburden himself of his experiences on the battlefield. Then, by using the Internet, and getting some aid from his brother-in-law, Nuro took the songs he had written and recorded them with cheap and improvised equipment he was able to scavenge and set up in Afghanistan. Such is the omnipresence of video in the age of the PC, laptop, and Iphone that he was also able to create his own music videos. The two aspects, music and video, linked together and finding a platform, at first on his MySpace profile, and later on YouTube, created a buzz for him that, twenty years ago, would have been expensively created by a label, under its own control.

Nuro used his own equipment for more than half of his music videos, the rudimentary editing and design of which was due to his Movie Maker. He later uploaded them to YouTube in two channels designed for storage. There, two archives dedicated to Nuro's productions started to take shape. One was managed by user "alfredorick" [102] and the other by user "comoasi1". [103] These two users also served as curators for Nuro's material. Axel Burns (2010) argues that part of the curatorial process is "ensuring that these materials are available, and safeguarding that continued circulation" (p. 33). This was precisely the roles of both users: organizing the material and posting it, not only on Nuro's MySpace, but also in different blogs dedicated to the hip-hop/rap scene. [104]

Different but common motifs populate Nuro's videos and lyrics: a love that awaits him, his family, and his homeland, Puerto Rico. But the inherent sentimentality of these themes is brought into contact with the reality principle of war, which is naturally the main topic in the productions of a man who made them on a warzone – the most violent kind of contact zone - in Central Asia. Yet the theme of the war, here, is used to parallel another war, one at home: the two wars are the WOT and the war within the hip-hop/rap scene. The latter, better known locally as *tiraera*[23] or taunting, are mechanisms particularly within hip-hop/rap where the lyrics include content which indirectly intends to degrade the competition or rival artists, sometimes even to the extent of reaching "lyrical or verbal wars" that explode into threats on a rival's life.

Nuro's discourse begins from his situation as a diasporic Puerto Rican, who moved to the mainland and so was found himself in a certain position within the world of Puerto Rican hip-hop. It is a zone that triggers questions in Nuro regarding his artistic and national identity. Raquel Rivera (2002), in her essay "Hip Hop and New York (NY) Puerto Ricans," recognized such identity crossings within hip-hop/rap in Puerto Rico and New York:

> The hip hop musical zone --in terms of Puerto Rican engagement-- is currently split into two related, but distinct subzones…a Boricua/Latino-centric rap scene…[and]…New York hip hop music scene. The Boricua/Latino centric is closely affiliated with the rap and reggae music being produced in Puerto Rico…. Most artists who participate in the Island-style rap and reggae circuit are Spanish-dominant and have either been raised primarily in the Island or spent substantial periods of their lives there (p. 129).

An Orlando resident, Nuro is fluent in English yet signs in Spanish; he makes his music in Afghanistan yet sings to Puerto Rico, even though his lyrics attack the island scene at the same time. This dynamic positions Nuro within two spaces, which will creates

[23] From the Spanish verb *tirar*, to shoot; as in shooting a bullet or arrow to a rival artist.

tensions not only in the genre's aesthetics,[105] but also in other layers of his identity. Rivera adds that ethno-racial, national origin, gender, sexual, and class identities are some of the defining affiliation categories within the hip-hop/rap scene. Nuro distances himself somewhat from such ethno-national signifying, but assumes an explicit ethno-national opinion as a Puerto Rican subject, despite his migration to Florida.

With the track "Con Todo" [106] ["with all"], Nuro alludes to the hip-hop/rap scene in the island. He positions himself as a typical (but real) soldier who verbally attacks other artists, such as Don Omar and Daddy Yankee, two major reggaetón exponents in Puerto Rico. The interesting thing is that the music video barely makes visual reference to the track's main topic (except for a few inserted images of rappers/reggaetoneros). The clip starts with a world map with an American flag over the United States. Immediately after, animations appear in the form of yellow boxes emerging from different regions in the world--United States, Europe, South America--which end over Puerto Rico. It gives the impression of a world dominated by some international presence that dominates over the island as well – but, on another reading, it can be interpreted as if all of the world is looking at Puerto Rico.

Then the lyrics begin, with a mash-up of images taken from advertising campaigns by the Puerto Rico Tourism Company, a government agency dedicated to promoting the island as a world tourist destination. For example there is footage from the coastlines, the Caribbean National Forest, Old San Juan, and also nigh-life scenes, etc. Inserted within a framework of paradise images, there appear visuals pointing to Puerto Rico's colonial past (i.e. Christopher Colombus, Taino Indian symbols, images of African slaves, etc.), as well as a Major League Baseball game. As can be seen, Nuro's image as a scene performer is visually enhanced by anything that portrays Puerto Rico

internationally. Puerto Rico is a world-famous tourist destination. In the same way, Puerto Rico is knows for its baseball players, such as Roberto Clemente.

The emphasis in tourism and in baseball seeks to offset the shame referred by Frances Negron Muntaner (2004) as a constitutive feature of Puerto Rican national identity as a product of our colonial past. However, this shame also works as a self-awareness process, and act of reflection and self-discovery. The idea of being observed acquires relevance at the end of the video with images from The Arecibo Radio Telescope and Observatory, the largest single-aperture radio telescope in the world. One can suggest that the telescope visuals are an allusion to the artist's range not only within the "scene," but also globally due to the diffusion power provided by UGC platforms, which also allow music distribution from the battlefield, the other war which the artist refers to in his lyrics.

In the track "Perdóname" ["forgive me"], Nuro justifies the WOT as a legitimate reaction to 9-11:

> Muchos se quejan del mundo y la manera en que viven; que si no hay trabajo, que si la Guerra no hace sentido. Mira puñeta se olvidaron de aquellos edificios. Estos puercos tartan de matar nuestra cultura; por eso le peleamos fuerte sin pena alguna. No hay nada en el mundo como pelear por una causa. Perdonenme, sino soy el mismo que antes era. He pasado veranos e inviernos matando para el gobierno[24]

[24] Literally:
Many complain about the world an about the way the live
There is no work; the war doesn't make sense
Look, goddammit, you forgot about those buildings!
These pigs try to kill our culture
So we fight to the death without any pity
There's nothing like fighting for a cause
Forgive me if I'm not the same man I was before
I've spent summers and winters killing for the government
(My translation)

The lyrics compare the murders committed by "those pigs" who took down the "buildings" and Nuro's own "killing for the government" – implying a tie between the pigs and the people he is killing. But the very violence of the rhetoric de-stabilizes the singer's position – the less he disguises his "killing", the more it can be called into question. Nuro is responding to an unnamed "many" – anti-war voices that are vaguely located within an "our" – voices in "our culture". In a sense, he both mocks those voices and instantiates their criticism – that the war is murder – in the last line, where Nuro's responsibility is devolved upon the government that he kills for. In the center of this unstable structure is the "changed man" – Nuro. Was he changed by the 9/11 attacks, or has he been changed by working in the killing fields? And whose culture is the "our culture" to which Nuro is referring?

As a song that subverts its own message, we can go back to the "changed man" at the center of it and try to position him in the ambiguities of an Island's Puerto Rican national culture linked to a political culture that includes/excludes the diasporic mainland Puerto Ricans. Nuro's changes are connected not only to war, but also to his standing with regard to the Island. The ideological worlds in disequilibrium in the lyrics of his music ambiguates any easy response to the song. It is uses features of a discourse similar to estadidad jíbara, or Puerto Ricanized statehood, a concept promoted by pro-statehood New Progressive Party and its founder, former governor Luis A. Ferré. The proposal is a version of statehood which maintains key cultural elements after admission into de Union, transferring them from the status quo under the commonwealth: English and Spanish as co-official languages, and international sovereignty at special venues, such as beauty pageants and Olympic sports. One may associate his opinion on the war with his duty as a soldier, a profession whose salary has allowed him to support daily-life and hip-hop/rap scene expenses.

In Nuro's "Plasta," or useless lump, [107] continues to explore the disequilibrium of the "changed man", here introduced as a "thing" – a phrase taken from the classic training of military recruits (and its reproduction in popular culture in such films as Full Metal Jacket), who are initiated into the military through a ritual of humiliation and abuse by superior officers. That ritual aspect infiltrates the movement of the narrative, which attacks the listener as a "useless lump", and an enemy ("Anyone who is not with me should shut up and suck my dick/ I do more in a day than what you do in a year") by taking the tacit insult leveled at soldiers (that they don't "work") and flings it back. Interestingly, in both songs, it is the singer's prowess as a soldier and not as a singer that is the focus – and in the second, it is the pure singer who is the object of scorn, an enemy in the dual battlefield: the WOT and the scene.

> Plasta, eres un actor en tu canción, Hablando de cosas que haces cuando eres un lambón. Soy solo un soldado que ha pecado' por su nación. Cargo un rifle y siete peines con el chaleco; y tengo una nueve en la pierna pa' dejarte el cholo prieto. Por las montañas me veras en busca de Talibanes; el que no esté conmigo que se calle y me lo mame. Hago más en un déa que lo que haces en un ano. Tu trabajo de da stress el mío es el que te hace daño.[25]

Nuro levels the WOT side by side with the war within hip-hop/rap, or tiraera. Nevertheless, he seeks to position himself at a level higher than his counterparts for two reasons: 1) his experience as a soldier in the U.S. Armed Forces provides him physical and symbolic weapons; and 2) the economic stability guaranteed by his military

[25] Literally:
Useless lump, you're an impostor in your own song
Talking about things you do when you suck up
I'm a soldier who has sinned for his nation
I carry a rifle and seven mags with my armor
And I have a nine on my leg so I can smash your head
In the mountains, you´ll see me looking for Talibans
Anyone who is not with me should shut up and suck my dick
I do more in a day than what you do in a year
You're work is stressful but mine is hurtful
(My translation)

profession. Nuro claims, then, a particular quotidian knowledge of danger--known in Puerto Rico as calle, or street knowledge--which allows him to pave his way – to present himself as the more dangerous one in the Afghan and street landscape – then his counterparts (the Taliban and the imposter singer). It is the authenticity of his dangerousness that allows Nuro to pronounce the other singer an imposter.

The track's video is a mash-up of images using raw visuals from Afghanistan combat missions. Sequences of Nuro then appear, wearing civilian clothing, performing in public spaces, seemingly abandoned and with plenty of grafiti. The way in which the images are inserted gives the impression that Nuro is performing from the battlefield in civilian clothing, which would violate the official military rules prohibiting military staff from wearing civilian clothing at war zones. As it is well-known, in Iraq and Afghanistan's urban landscape there are many abandoned buildings, most of them with graffiti by the soldiers themselves. The editing takes advantage of the fact that the visuals can't be placed with certainty – they may be from the actual battlefield, or from some other place (whether Puerto Rico or the mainland). News footage of police raids in Puerto Rico's public housing projects add more confusion to the play on images. This image mash-up is also intervened by a filter which distorts the original images--by affecting pixilation and coloring--transforming them into something new. This operates, on one level, to recode and thus comment about the images – and it may be a strategy to avoid infringing copyright laws as well. The YouTube context has acquainted thousands of end users with the ins and outs of Intellectual Property laws. The artist on YouTube not only creates and consumes video content, but also has to understand the legal rules in play, at least as YouTube somewhat arbitrarily interprets them.

Using "quotations" from local newscasts operates as a way to connect Nuro's experience in the battlefield with Puerto Rico's 'war' on drugs, a militarization of crime

prevention that is now engrained in the Island culture, imposed by the mainland. For Nuro, his combat experience in the WOT intertwines with his civilian experiences amidst this 'war'. Nuro grew up in 1990s Puerto Rico, during Governor Rosselló's (1992-2000) controversial anticrime plan, *Mano dura contra el crimen*, or iron fist against crime. This public policy targeted public housing projects as crime spots, making them the favorite target for raids in Puerto Rico. The *mano dura* policy included a number of interventions, such as building access control gates, assigning the national guard to public housing projects, renovating housing projects, establishing social programs, privatizing housing project management, and building recreation programs and centers, all intended to crack down on the crime supposedly generated by the public housing population and to improve the welfare of public housing residents if they cooperated. Therefore, including these visual constitutes a social commentary to that policy. While, from the establishment point of view, public housing generates crime, from the point of view of musicians, it certainly generates music – hence, its symbolic centrality in the Puerto Rican scene. Nuro's positioning as a soldier and as a singer who takes his rhetoric from the scene's rhetoric destabilizes that both determinants of that rhetoric, and leaves the viewer/listener in the position of reflecting on her or his own position.

Lastly, I would like to comment on the album's artwork, composed of a photomontage in which Nuro appears wearing his military uniforms, sculpting a wall with his name and album title, Homemade. As mentioned in Chapter Two, marking spaces with identity insignia--also known as "flagging"-- is a common practice in military spaces during the present war in order to subvert power relations. Contrary to examples I used in the second chapter, where the painted mural and graffiti were preferred mechanisms for marking territory, Nuro takes music to another level: sculpting. On his reading on Haitian-Puerto Rican artist Jean Michel Basquiat, Negrón-Muntaner

(2004) states that graffiti is a practice which carries a negative connotation, and which has been radicalized in the U. S. In this way, Nuro distances himself from cultural graffiti, associated with New York's hip-hop/rap scene as a way for articulating the artist's homemade brand.

Even so, the issue deserves asking to which "home" is Nuro referring to when he speaks about "homemade". Is the "home" in question his native Puerto Rico? Or is it Florida, the place he moved to as a teenager? Is it the battlefield where he becomes a prod-user? Judging by his song's topics, "home" seems to be Puerto Rico, the imagine homeland shaped by some of his lyrics and videos. "Home," however, could indicate a mobile home, a home in movement, a space of to-ing and fro-ing, as Jorge Duany puts it. A home shaped by music that circulates through UGSs.

CAMOUFLAGING AN UN-OFFICIAL DISCOURSE

Military bases as both places in which recruits are trained and sites in which contact between different cultural groups are effected are, perhaps for these reasons, one of the richest spaces when it comes to video production. User "CASTROsoldier1985," [108] a twenty-four-year-old Puerto Rican soldier, is one of the UGC's most active prod-users. At the moment, his channel contains eighteen videos organized by the locations of the military bases where he has been stationed: a) Boricuas in Texas, and b) Boricuas in Korea. Despite the fact that the videos are mostly unedited fragments portraying his base daily life, some clips deserve special attention.

One of the videos from the series 'Boricua en Korea' reenacts a training session with a drill sergeant. A drill sergeant is responsible for coaching, counseling, and mentoring of hundreds of soldiers in their transformation from a civilian to a combat-

ready. Their duties include military discipline, physical fitness, and weapons training.[109] One of the tests given by the drill sergeant consists of doing sit-ups and push-ups. Puerto Rican sergeant Antonnetti must complete this test in order to prove himself before his drill sergeant as well as his colleagues. While the viewer observes the iconic image of a soldier completing the physical test, the sound track records a stream of mocking comments directed at Antonnetti, who restlessly struggles to complete the test.

The need to prove himself before his mates seeks to counter the imaginary notion that puts the Puerto Rican soldier at a disadvantage, not only in matters concerning second-class citizenship, but also in the prejudice that Puerto Ricans lack the physical stamina of other U.S. soldiers. Although the persons who seems to be the drill sergeant directs the test according to protocol, the end of the video reveals that it is only another Puerto Rican soldier who decided to mock the test with Antonnetti. Here, again, one of the tacit mash-up principles – the absorption of a force directed against the mashup subject into the subject's tactical irony – is employed to construct the video's story.

Following this line, the video "Giant Redneck vs. Skinny Puerto Rican" works on the way in which power relations at the intra-contact zone are reversed,[110] by placing the ethno-national subaltern in a power position. The video shows a wrestling match between a white soldier and a Puerto Rican solider before an audience composed mostly by military personnel watching the fight, surrounded by tanks, right out in the battlefield. The clip, somewhat more sophisticated in terms of editing and music mixing than others, includes credits and even a soundtrack. It establishes an ethnic duel in which the sides are marked by direct use of stereotypes and ethno cultural categories, such as "redneck". Naming the clip "Giant Redneck vs. Skinny Puerto Rican" is a play with power relations in which power is constantly taken away from the white subject. On the one hand, he is called a "giant," an indicator of physical prowess, yet, on the other, he is a "redneck"

giant, a pejorative term referring to working-class, uneducated, pro-English only whites, and lending to the notion of above average physicality the connotation of unintelligence. Also called "trailer white trash" (Carr, 1996), this stereotype has been historically used to refer to the white Other, not only in literature, but also in the media. By thus degrading the white subject, he is placed at the same level as the Puerto Rican subject, who is a natural-born second-class citizen.

The video track is "Die, Motherfucker, Die," by Dope, a heavy metal song concerning a declared duel between two rivals. Pieslak pointed out that metal music can be interpreted as an appeal to the power of the dis-empowered individual. It is a music genre that operates not as a dominating force over the fan, but as an empowering agent. Aesthetics of the genre, such as the repeated refrain, heavy guitar distortion, and the vocal yelling articulation are some of the elements that, according to Pieslak, enhance the power of the individual. The social roots of metal are in lower middle class, white male youth culture; thus, using metal as the soundtrack for the video is an appropriation by the Puerto Rican of a genre that is not commonly associated to him. The video context, then, insofar as it was produced by a Puerto Rican soldier, challenges traditional power relations though song. The lyrics say:

> I don't need your forgiveness. I don't need your hate. I don't need your acceptance. So what should I do. I don't need your resistance. I don't need your prayers. I don't need your religion. I don't need a thing from you[111]

In this way, the colonial-racialized subaltern achieves autonomy not only by physically winning the due, but also by verbally turning the song lyrics against their social origin as an expression of the rebellious ethno-national subject, who is willing to pit his 'skinny' physical force against a giant.

Along the same line of mimicking and mocking the military's official discourse and practices, the video "Promocion Boricua"[112] [Borcua promotion] is an interesting example. In the video, a group of Puerto Rican soldiers celebrates the army promotion one of the soldiers in their unit --known in the video as "Pinky". He was promoted from Private First Class--who are promoted after one year or earlier by supervisor request--to Specialist--a rank given to someone who has served a minimum of two years and attended a specific training class to earn the promotion.[113] The military promotion system, which instills a democratic process into a heavily hierarchical system, is a complex procedure. The criteria and processes vary between the branches, and also depend on the context of the war. For example, the WOT has seen many "battlefield promotions", to use the DoD parlance. The battlefield promotion program recognizes and promotes soldiers for extraordinary duty performance while in combat or under combat conditions. A promotion ceremony follows different improvised cultural protocols.

First, there are heavy accents--sometimes yelling--and code switching between English and Spanish during the quasi-ceremony. Puerto Rican have struggled with English fluency since their inclusion into the U.S. Armed Forces. In this particular case, the unit takes advantage of the language barrier to mock official discourse. Second, although the promotion can only be understood in terms of a hierarchy that takes itself very seriously, there is no solemnity in this clip. On the contrary, there dominates a tone of mockery, not only toward the promoted soldier, but also toward the promotion ritual itself, to the extent that the ceremony ends by pouring beer over the promoted soldier's head. This gesture could be seen as a carnivalesque reversal of the seriousness of the official discourse, but that mockery itself may merely be a passive aggressive means of accepting the subordination implicit in the promotion, with the mockery allowed temporarily in the knowledge that the seriousness of the matter will soon be restored.

Third, during the promoter's speech (PROMOTER) and the soldier recording the occasion (CAMERA MAN), there is a reference to local politics:

PROMOTER: The Department of the Army….

CAMERA MAN: La que paga.

PROMOTER: La que paga, puñeta…

CAMERA MAN: Por orden de Anibal Acevedo Vila…

PROMOTER: Mira canto de carbon. Saca ese carbon de aqui. For the order of the President of the United States and el coronel no se quien fue el cabron que te mando a subir, you are promoted from PFC Pinky, to Specialist, Pinky también.[26]

Here, one can see the power splitting between the federal government discourse and the local one. In the name of whom is the promotion attributed: the president of the United States or the governor of Puerto Rico. This instance also reflects the diversity of opinion in terms of Puerto Rico's political status, where some Puerto Ricans support a colonial solution--as former governor Acevedo Vilá's mention, who is pro-commonwealth--while others support Puerto Rico's integration to the Union as the 51st state as an alleged guarantee of full citizenship.

The video "Buzz's Re Enlistment" [114] recreates the re-enlisting of a young Puerto Rican soldier in the military. Many times soldiers who have served out their duties and tours decide to re-enlist in the military after one or more tours; in most instances, this involves receiving clearance to re-enlist in the military from their supervising officers.

[26] Literally:
-The Department of the Army...
-The one who pays...
--The one who pays, goddammit
-By order of Aníbal Acevedo Vilá...
-Look, motherfucker. Get that motherfucker out of here! By the order of the President of the United States and the colonel, I don't know the motherfucker who's promoting you, you're promoted from PFC Pinky, to Specialist Pinky, also.

The video, in documentary fashion, begins with a group of soldiers in uniform walking by the roads of the Caribbean National Forest, El Yunque. Immediately after that, four soldiers appear inside Cascada la Coca, a waterfall in El Yunque and one of the forest's tourist spots. There is the reenlisting soldier taking his oath, and in the back, in front of the waterfall, two colleagues hold the American flag. What's interesting about the video is the cultural dynamics, which render the event's official character ambiguous. According to the Pre-ceremonial Considerations ("Reenlistment Ceremony ", 2012), the event should follow the following requirements:

- In some cases, Soldiers and commands desire the ceremony to be conducted in connection with activities such as parachuting, climbing utility poles, and other similar acts. These activities are not in keeping with the solemnity associated with the oath of reenlistment and will not be part of the ceremony.
- The ceremony should be conducted in proper military uniform.
- Coordinate appropriate photographic support.
- Ensure a flag of the United States of America is prominently displayed in the immediate vicinity of the administering officer and Soldier.
- Oath of reenlistment. Verify with Soldier to determine if he or she prefers to "swear" or "affirm".
- The phrase, "so help me God" may be deleted for Soldiers electing to "affirm".

One look at the video confirms compliance with most official protocols. For example, wearing the proper military uniform, using visual support (the person recording the event), displaying the flag, and so forth. Yet, there are indications of the contrary. For example, given the fact that the live sound of the video is muted in relation to the background music, the viewer does not hear the kind of oath the soldier is pledging. At the end of the scene, all four solider start to horse around, causing the flag to become wet.

These framing instances of informality lend a certain lack of solemnity, a certain mockery, to the reenlistment.

Interestingly, the lack of solemnity in the clips showing ceremonies where solemnity is expected contrast with the vicarious seriousness given to the implementation of salsa dancing at military bases during the WOT.

CHOREOGRAPHED IDENTITY: SALSA NIGHTS IN THE BATTLE ZONES

Music in not merely an individual practice, as witnesses by the case of soldier prod-user Nuro; it also irrupts collectively in the battlefield. One of the most prominent themes among the videos posted on the UGCs is that of the Salsa Night. Here, Puerto Rican soldiers along with other, mostly Latino soldiers, engage in what has become a recreational tradition in the military camps during the WOT. Salsa Nights are coordinated and sometimes spontaneous events, in which Puerto Rican soldiers gather at some improvised space within the camp not only to dance, but also to give salsa lessons and even hold dancing contests. These venues, often promoted by the U.S. Army itself, have been covered by the national media. The media angle regarding Salsa Nights, however, is quite different from lip-synch videos also covered by them.

For example, The Dallas Morning News writes, "Capt. Troy Parrish from Minnesota does not know the Latin steps and just watches the men from Colombia, Mexico, and Puerto Rico in their desert fatigues and sand-colored army boots as they spin the heavily outnumbered women soldiers to exhaustion" (Hudson, 2003). Another news press clip states that "Attracting an amazing diversity of hundreds of service members and civilians each week from countless social backgrounds and ethnic cultures, 'Salsa Night' is rapidly transforming Saturday into the most popular night of the week" (White,

2004). As one can see, Salsa Nights have been not only assimilated by the army, but encouraged as a quasi-official event within the military-camp dynamics in Iraq and Afghanistan. Their popularity is evident not only in press coverage, but also in the great number of units of the sort in YouTube.

The popularity of salsa and its associations are by no means an exclusively Puerto Rican concern. The events' collective nature is, of course, open to all soldiers. It still remains a fact that the nights are quite popular with Puerto Rican soldiers, and I found a large number of videos featuring salsa nights on Puerto Rican soldier profiles in MySpace and Facebook, and on the UGCs. The channel "Salsa Night in Bagram," Afghanistan, contains a total of eighteen videos of couples dancing salsa. In the video "Salsa en Iraq"[115] a person left a comment that says:

> Barriovivo: tremendo, la_ sangre latina siempre se hace sentir. felicidades y regresen pronto (vivos)[27]

The comment that takes salsa to be a metonym for "Latino blood" derives from the fact that, although claimed in many cultural instances by the Puerto Rican community in New York (i.e. Tito Puente, Hecto Lavoe, Frankie Ruiz, La India, Victor Manuelle, El Gran Combo, etc), salsa has been claimed by many diasporic Latino communities such as Cuba and Colombia. A content analysis of lyrics of popular salsa music by Felix Padilla (1989) reveals the emergence of cultural topics emphasizing the shared lives of Spanish-speaking communities in the U.S., in contrast to the ethnic-distinctive Puerto Rican reality that formed the content of the original salsa beat. The author acknowledged the emerging Latino character of the genre by identifying the various cultural elements or symbols used by the performers in their construction of Latinidad through salsa.

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[27] Barriovivo: Excellent! Latin blood is felt everywhere. Congratulation, and come back soon (alive). [My translation].

But beyond the pan-Latino approach, the history of salsa has sustained a degree of resistance to assimilation and marginalization in the U.S. Priscilla Renta (2004) explains that:

> "Latino/a performances of salsa dance, which often falls within the scope of affirming pleasures, has the potential to function in opposition to the pressures of assimilating into the Euro-American culture that dominates U.S. society…[because]…it is a transcultural phenomenon that has been negotiating between dominant and subjugated dance practices dating back to its colonial history in the Caribbean and Latin America" (p. 144).

For example, while mambo and son were highly influenced by North American jazz and the swing band era, salsa has so far resisted these influences. In as much as salsa has not taken on the degree of hybridity as many other Latino musical genres, it claims a cultural space which is more independent from the non-Latino dominated military hierarchy. This history gives salsa an overt identity symbolism in the contact zone of the battlefield, allowing men and women to articulate their identity choreographies without marking that space as one of defiance; it provides a space for male-female relationships that is otherwise much rarer in the war zone. However, it must be stated that the videos are the only instances in which Puerto Ricanness is relegated to a membership to an imagined Latino community. In fact, it is impossible to discern who is Puerto Rican and who is not in the videos, because dance camouflages specific cultural identities.

Out of the various salsa videos, one of the most interesting units in the one titled "Dancing Salsa in Tikrit, Iraq". [116] The video shows a couple dancing salsa out of the contexts typically associated with dance itself. The setting moves away from salsa nights and collective dancing to what seems to be a multi-use barrack in Tikrit. First of all, I would like to establish that Tikrit was Saddam Hussein's "home town", which was the subject of some famous suicide bombings in that very camp in the year 2004. The video, recorded against the light, creates an effect where the viewers can only see the couple's

silhouette, not their faces and thus their identity. The image, with the background of empty tables, makes it seem as if this dance were a spontaneous and perhaps clandestine occurrence, perhaps interrupting the work hour.

Once the couples is done dancing, the turn off the radio and resume their duties, as if the dance had been a dream. The video segment marks the interruption of military routine with choreographies that distance themselves from traditional military formations. Through dance, the Latino subject positions his or herself successfully above the rest of their colleagues, because they have a knowledge that comes from dominating the genre. It is a superiority which the Puerto Rican soldier not only dominates due to his or her roots (the genre can be traced back to Puerto Rico and the New York diaspora), but also due to the dissemination in UGC networks, thus marking the contact zone to a salsa beat.

SMELLS AND TASTES LIKE HOME ONLINE

In my chapter on MySpace and Facebook profiles, I pointed out that Puerto Rican gastronomy figures among the most mentioned topics in the soldier's status updates. The connection between food and ideas of home and homeland led me to think that the consumption of Puerto Rican foods and goods is a frequent source of emotions, such as nostalgia and longing. According to Raviv (2002) whether it is individual consumption, food production, or the idea of a common, shared cuisine, food plays an important role in the articulation of national identity. Food operates as both a compensation for deprivations on the battlefield (food from home) and that which cannot be substituted (the complaint of the lack of food from home); in civilian contact zones, it can be employed to configure distinctions between "us" and "others," but at the same time, it

can also serve as a cultural glue, especially for those identities spread around different parts of the world.

For example, one of the most circulated videos in some of the soldiers' MySpace and Facebook profiles is a television ad by *Mami* coffee. According to the brand's website, *Mami* coffee[117] is cultivated, toasted, and packed in Puerto Rico. The *Mami* company uses the image of the Puerto Rican solider as part of its advertising strategy, which is startling when we consider the invisibility that has traditionally been the lot of the Puerto Rican soldier. The ad presents José, a Puerto Rican soldier serving in the WOT, who is excited at the possibility of receiving a package from Puerto Rico. Then, the ad presents José's mother at the supermarket purchasing *Mami* coffee. The ad then moves to the Middle East again, and the viewer can hear the conversation among soldiers, José's colleagues:

Soldado #1: Mmm, aquí huele a Puerto Rico.

Soldado #2: Es que a José le llego el Café *Mami*.[28]

Later, the narrator enunciates the slogan: "Café Mami, es de primera, para compartirlo, donde quiera".[29] The ad ends by portraying several solders in a tent eating coffee, with the Puerto Rican flag in the background.

The commercial thus presents coffee as cultural glue, in association with the Puerto Rican flag. Its aroma not only invokes home memories, but makes one feel temporarily right at home – its compensatory function. The name "Mami" deserves special attention. It can refer to the mother, missed by service members, and is also a term of endearment typical in Puerto Rico to refer to a girlfriend/lover/wife. "Mami" can

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[28] Soldier 1: Hmm, it smells like coffee in here.
Soldier 2: Yeah, José received his Mami coffee.
[My translation]

[29] Mami coffee is high quality, which can be shared anywhere. [My translation].

also be the motherland. Lidia Marte's (2008) dissertation on Dominican food in New York states that "Food has the power to ground us in-place and at the same time (through memory) helps us transcend our present moment" (p. 2). She understands that food socialization leaves deep marks in the ways we perceive, relate, consume, and imagine a sense of "home" in the world. In the case of the television ad, it is evident the way coffee gathers Puerto Rican serving in the battlefield together in as space created by a coffee aroma. Food is as much a matter of odor as of taste, two senses that are more difficult to represent in the multi-media world than sight and hearing because they are, by their nature, more intimate. In fact, the commercial does not show any other ethnicity, only Puerto Ricans enjoying - visually – a taste and odor that is, supposedly, singularly Puerto Rican, which could lead one to think that coffee, as cultural glue, binds us together as Puerto Rican and separates us from the rest.

Another video on YouTube dedicated to the production of Puerto Rican gastronomy is titled "La Cocina Kaboom de los Borikuas" [Boricua's Kaboom Cousine]. The description of the video, in English and Spanish says:

> Three soldiers belonging to the 35th Signal Battalion in Puerto Rico were hungry and decided to have fun too. Tres soldados que pertencen al Batallón de la 35 de Puerto Rico ubicados en Iraq, con hambre.

The video, which shows a serious nature and good editing skills, emulates a food program presented by three Puerto Rican soldiers. I would like to point out that in Puerto Rico, there is a long gastronomical television program tradition, evident in the list of programs that occupied an important place in the history of Puerto Rican television. For example, there are shows which mix up comedy with food, such as *Entrando por la cocina* ["entering the house though the kitchen"][30] (WAPA TV) and *Friendo y comiendo*

[30] An allusion to a Spanish idiom that says: Love enters (the house) through the kitchen; pointing to the stereotype that a man should marry a wife who can cook well.

["frying and eating"][31] (Telemundo) were part of the local programming for more than thirty years. Mostly because, as Arlene Davila pointed out, "Programs that are made in Puerto Rico principally consist of local news and low-budget comedy shows…highly dependent on commercial sponsorship" (Davila, 1998). These programs not only showed how to prepare meals, they also commented on local news. "La Cocina Kaboom" shows how to prepare paella step by step.

Paella is a traditional recipe from the Spanish cuisine. The colonial influence of Spain in Puerto Rican gastronomy has made the paella a well-known dish in the island. One may argue that preparing it links Puerto Ricans to their Spanish-European heritage in the contact zone, thus making a larger claim for a history equal with its own language, foods and flavors, derived from but different than the Spanish colonists. In the same way, national pride stands out throughout the video. For example, they announce product placement, "Arroz Rico, el mejor de Puerto Rico" [Rico rice, the best in Puerto Rico]. Therefore, there is an essentialist notion regarding the origin of the ingredients, which makes the recipe more authentic, and thus, the idea of home channel by gastronomy is purer. The soldiers, by creating this video, produce "do-it-yourself knowledge," which pertains to creating a community of food lovers. A limited community, because the presenter speaks only Spanish, which employs the power of food as a communication resource, as a site for narrative performance and as a mediator for cultural encounters in the contact zone. Finally, a comment should be made on the title of the show: La Cocina Kaboom. This not only stands in for a gender joke –men in the kitchen exploding things – but it locates this domestic activity in a zone of potential mortal combat. It mixes the

[31] The name of the show is an idiom that point to quickness. Since most of Puerto Rican cuisine is fried, one can quickly prepare a meal any day.

kitchen and the IED – thus pointing to the offline mashups of contact zones in constant movement.

THE NOT-QUITE HERO AND THE ANTI-HERO: SUBVERTING THE IMAGE THROUGH UGCS

One of the advantages of using UGC networks is that independent filmmakers--with no economic means to distribute their material--may expose and promote their film projects. Vimeo is a favorite choice in this sense. Just as in YouTube's case, Vimeo is a video-sharing website in which users can upload, share, view, and comment videos. Founded in 2004 by Jake Lodwick and Zach Klein, Vimeo has a large audience and is promotes an ambiance of more aspiration than YouTube, in that it is more connected to the community of indie filmmakers and great numbers of people with a passion for film and video production. Vimeo is the UGC on which Filmster Productions[118] decided to show their film work on *The Jean Cruz Story*.[119] The video clip tells the story of a Puerto Rican veteran from the Bronx who aided in capturing Saddam Hussein.

The setting is what Cruz says is his home, that is, the Bronx, yet the narration is based on his memories of a literal battlefield, in Iraq, and the metaphorical battlefield of his youth in the barrio. Like Nuro, Cruz takes this metaphor seriously. Cruz's story is of a tragic fall: despite his contribution to Saddam Hussein's capture, he was given a early discharge from the army because he showed symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This means, ironically, that Cruz, who has need of treatment, is not eligible for full veteran benefits because he showed he had need of treatment – the kind of Catch-that the military has a penchant for. His combat story intertwines with his youth story in the barrio; for example, growing up in poverty, studying in the worst schools, and joining the armed forces in search of a better life. This heroic narrative arc is interrupted by the

reality that his situation as a subaltern makes it hard for him to adjust to society, especially after his encounter with massive violence. He now has to depend on medication for handling his emotions and his memories about war crimes. In a cruel twist, his PTSD has damaged his ability to relate to his young child.

The documentary seeks to call the audience's attention to the ironic situation of a man who, rather than being considered a national hero, actually lives in dire circumstances. As a war veteran, Cruz does not receive all the benefits promised by the recruiting office. Although the clip does not talk about his Puerto Ricanness, it is worth mentioning that the Bronx is historically considered a barrio populated mostly by Puerto Ricans, who comprise almost 40 % of the borough's population. The video does have a caption at the end that says, "*The Jean Cruz Story* is dedicated to making things better for all American veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan".

Perhaps in the background of the Jean Cruz's documentary there is some memory of the events of two years before, when José Padilla (a.k.a. Abullah Al Muhajir) was arrested for terrorism. Padilla is surely the Puerto Rican antihero of the WOT. Like Cruz, Padilla's parents are Puerto Rican, and he grew up in a poor neighborhood, in his case in Chicago. Nevertheless, Padilla did receive recognition by President George W. Bush, who referred to him as a "bad guy"(Lithwick, 2005) due to his link with Al Qaeda and, therefore, with the 9-11 attacks. In Puerto Rico, the local press calle Padilla "el talibán boricua," or Puerto Rican Taliban. The news about Padilla makes his reading as Puerto Rican difficult because he considered himself to be African American (according to his driver's license) and because he had converted to Islam. Yet these facts did not prevent Padilla from becoming "America's domestic terrorist poster boy"(Negrón-Muntaner, 2007). Mediatically, Padilla perfectly fitted the Puerto Rican profile: he is a social

deviant, a product of urban criminal youth gangs, which since West Side Story have connoted a certain Puerto Rican urban experience in the U.S.

From the perspective of this contrast, Jean Cruz's story has a bittersweet irony for the Puerto Rican subject longing for recognition from the mainland. He broke the imaginary mold for the Puerto Rican solider by becoming a hero, yet he could not live with this status, succumbing to Imperial violence and the social conditions of his second-class citizenship. The documentary makes clear his valor in battle. Cruz's story raises the question of those who were not involved in celebrated maneuvers and still fell prey to traumas, broken promises, and difficult homecomings. And Cruz himself is not a celebrity. In fact, few know about our hero, in contrast to the many who know about our very own Taliban soldier.

UGCs are businesses that, out of capitalist logic, have allowed for the infiltration of a subversive popular imaginary upon the landscape of monopoly media. YouTube's decision to rely on others to both produce content and to manage it on their platform does give ordinary people the opportunity to perform for potentially large audiences. The production, storage and distribution of videos on UGCs such as YouTube--and to a lesser extent, Vimeo--have increased exponentially over the last three years of my investigation. The advances in digital/social media, particularly the arrival of smart phones, allowed thousands of servicemen and women to produce, store, and circulate content from the battlefield like never before, with the opportunity to restructure the war narrative. YouTube provides control over production conditions and the consumption of self-representations, or what Koskela (2004) refers to as "empowering exhibitionism". Empowering exhibitionism (Koskela, 2004) is the idea that "deliberately produced images contest many of the conventional ways of thinking how visibility and transparency connote with power and control. To be (more) seen is not always to be less

powerful…Images can be played with, and can work as a form of resistance. Sometimes it is more radical to reveal than to hide (p. 199). In the soldier's case, empowerment comes from several sources: empowerment by showing the world they are challenging the constraints and restrictions of the military, in defiance of the censorship situation that was imposed starting back in 2007. Secondly, empowering by displaying their bodies in a space charged with danger and uncertainty. Thirdly, empowerment by creating new forms of representations which offer visibility, and also challenge, in several fashions, the imaginary of the Puerto Rican soldier.

However, the videos are structured not only by the positive inputs of the prod-users, but as well by the history of subjectivication that has marked the soldier, often unconsciously, as he or she attempts to connect to various imagined communities, one of which is the subcommunity of servicemen and women in the U.S military. Even those who are most ardently aligned with the justification of WoT show, in their themes and video rhetoric, problems with the overarching imperial narrative. As Nava (2010) pointed out in relation to mash-up videos, they doe not necesairly "demand critical reflection, but rather practical awareness" (p. 171). In my observation of the Puerto Rican soldiers' mash-up videos, the work of self-understanding that happens within the mashup identity characteristically is channeled through motifs and themes from entertainment and the tides of socio-political commentary; using elements of pop culture, Puerto Rican icons, and their individual stances on their position in the WoT, these soldiers cope more or less successfully with the burdens of second-class citizen that have confronted past Puerto Rican soldiers, without accepting invisibility as their fate. This is the liberatory potential that is common to these videos, however much they may differ.

Chapter IV: States of Digital Mourning: Web Memorializing Puerto Rican Soldiers in the 21st Century

When U.S. soldier number four thousand died on March 24, 2008, it was a media event, headlines presented various descriptions of it '4000 U.S. dead in war 'well worth fighting,'[120] 'Bomb takes U.S. deaths in Iraq past 4000,'[121] 'Scores die on bloody Sunday,'[122] '4,000 Counting the cost of the war in Iraq'[123]), interrupting what had become a pervasive media disinterest in the Iraq occupation. Subsequently, statistics about the total number of deaths started circulating as well. Out of the four thousand dead, 81.5 percent were killed in action; 18.5 percent by accident, illness, murder, or suicide. Of those killed, 50.6 percent were under the age of 25. A total of 97.6 percent of dead Americans were male. 74.8 percent were white, 13.9 percent were black, and 10.7 Latino. Of this percentage of Latino soldiers, nearly one hundred were Puerto Rican (Montero, 2008). According to Noah Schatman (2010), the names of soldiers dying in incidents related with the War On Terror sometimes appear on social networking sites before they are officially released, chipping away at the DoD control of one of the most important aspects of the war: its cost in blood (at least, in American and "coalition" blood – there are no official figures on the cost in blood to the Iraqis).

Given the circumstances of their deaths in Iraq and the official procedures of the military, the bodies took weeks (even months) to arrive in the island to receive the full-honor funeral rites. These bodies are the counters of biopower, (Foucault, 1990), that is, the penetration of state norms and disciplines on the bodily existence of its subjects – their sex, growth, nourishment, sicknesses and deaths. Traditionally, the military control of corpses is a highly charged symbol of biopower; even in archaic Greece, as the Iliad shows, enormous meaning was invested in rescuing the dead from the other side. It is the tacit contract that the military makes with its soldiers, and it also shows that the power of

the military is continuous and without limit. Yet the lacuna between the death and the funeral rites is felt by loved ones, which is the motivation for creating a memorial. Just memorials are set up alongside roads to honor traffic accident victims, the virtual network of the web has become, as well, a memorial site, often preceding the burial proper. This intriguingly reverses the conventional sequence of the funeral ritual. Web memorials, often known as online memorials or virtual cemeteries, are created by individuals or groups to express "grief, bereavement and loss; unfinished business; living social presence; and/or historical significance" (Veale, 2004).

In this chapter I will explore the articulation of identities of WoT casualties in web memorials. However, in order to explore the universe of memorials from which web memorials are derived, I will begin with a brief survey of physical monuments/memorials dedicated to Puerto Rican soldiers/veteran on the island and their insertion in the public memory of Puerto Rico. In order to understand the tradition of memorializing servicemen and women in Puerto Rico, I visited a number of physical monuments/memorials that honor the participation of Puerto Ricans in the Spanish-American War, World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. Subsequently, I moved from offline to online environments and focused my analysis of on two trends in web memorials dedicated to the fallen Puerto Rican soldiers: spontaneous-unintended and corporate-sponsored web memorials. The first one refers to memorials that emerge on SNS pages. I identified two kinds of memorials that emerged from these spaces: a) the one are profiles originally created by the now deceased soldier, on which messages of mourning by family members and/or friends have been added, turning the profile into an improvised Web memorial, which was never intended by the original user; and b) memorials exclusively created after the soldiers' deaths by family and/or friends for memorializing purposes.

The second trend responds to a corporate-sponsored web memorial. For this trend I am primarily looking at a special section of the online edition of Puerto Rico's leading newspaper, El Nuevo Día[124] ("The New Day," in English), entitled 'Héroes Boricuas'[125] ("Boricua Heroes," in English). This special edition, which is only available online, was created by the newspaper's editorial team. It is composed of a main index with links to a series of vignettes that contain text and images of around seventy fallen soldiers, in effect creating an online network of the dead. For comparison's sake, I also observed and interpreted other digital memorializings of Puerto Rican soldiers, as for instance those who fought in Vietnam, who have been honored by a Virtual Wall, an online replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. launched in March 2008.

My specific focus is to decode how the articulation of the ethnonational identities of these soldiers is managed on Web memorials that arise from the fact that some Puerto Rican has been killed during the WOT or incidents related. How, then, are racial-colonial subjectivities in this situation either reproduced or challenged? I am particularly interested in the ways in which these memorials narrativize the notion of second-class citizenship in terms of the classical tropes of heroism. I follow the same triangulation of methods I employ on Chapter II, which included an online ethnography, textual analysis, and critical discourse analysis. I also performed a participant observation of physical monuments/memorials in Puerto Rico during the Veterans Day celebration. During a preliminary review of memorial traditions online, I became concerned that the methods of analysis I was using were insufficient to encompass the complexities of these spaces. Thus, in order to go beyond a descriptive level, I will inform my analysis with larger discussions about memorial studies and technologies of memory (Rigney, 2005; Sturken, 1991, 1997, 1998, 2002, 2004, 2007, 2008; Sturken & Cartwright, 2001).

It is important to acknowledge that, at the moment in which I am conducting this research, these Web memorials are embedded in a socio-historical context that entails a war in progress with approximately four hundred Puerto Rican casualties. Here I will borrow from Trouillot's (1995) historical schema, which picks out four moments in the production of socio-historical narratives in which the semiotic forces in the field crystallize. [The first is] "the moment of fact creation (the making of sources); [the second] the moment of fact assembly (the making of archives); the [third is the] moment of fact retrieval (the making of narratives); and the [fourth is] moment of retrospective significance (the making of history) in the final instance" (p. 26) These four moments coined by Trouillot provide us with a framework to see the digital/social media as a platform from which to mount interventions into the official narratives of the military (which are not necessarily opposed in content to the latter, but which, by their very form, take away some power from the DoD). In this case, the intervention is encoded in the act of memorializing and the construction of a hero/heroine figure. The moment of fact creation is the announcement of the death of the soldier; the moment of fact assembly is the formation (of the spontaneous-unintended or corporate-sponsored type) of the web memorial as a space to display and store manifestations of grief, mourning and remembrance. The moment of fact retrieval is the array of stories that can be inserted into the web memorial product. Finally, the moment of retrospective arrangement responds to the intervention of the web memorial in the official-universalizing story of the soldier. In the next section I will sketch the social and academic significance of studying memorialization and remembrance from a media based approach.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MEMORY STUDIES

One of the scholars who has influenced me in reflecting on the role of visual culture in the articulation of memory is Marita Sturken (Sturken 1991; Sturken 1997; Sturken 1998; Sturken and Cartwright 2001; Sturken 2002; Sturken 2004; Sturken 2007; Sturken 2008). Her work has been crucial to the emergence of Memory Studies as a formal field. In an editorial for the new Journal of Memory Studies titled Consumerism and Media: Reflection on the Emergence of the Field, Sturken sketched out several arguments for the importance of the field across the disciplines. She argues that the study of memorials served as an interesting framework through which to pose a set of questions about the politics of identity, community, nation, media, and image. She proposes three approaches to the field: memory practices, mediation of memory, and technologies of memory and consumerism.

The importance of seeing memory as practice rather than as a static object reveals the dynamic axis through which cultural practices generate and are generated by memory within the larger process of cultural negotiation. For this reason, Sturken prefers using the term 'cultural memory' rather than 'collective memory'. She argues that: "Cultural memory as a term implies not only that memories are often produced and reproduced through cultural forms, but also the kind of circulation that exists between personal memories and cultural memories" (p. 74). Accordingly, such a circulation occurs in many ways through the so-called technologies of memory. These are "objects [through] which memories are shared, produced, and giving meaning…[within]…the power dynamics of memory's production" (p. 10). Social/digital media fall naturally among the technologies of memory, while blurring the line between memory in the private and in the public sphere. For this reason, a media-based approach to memory will lead to an understanding of the way memories are communicated, circulated, exchanged, and consumed.

Rigney (2005) has made the case for seeing how identities may be re-articulated through memorial practices that are formed within different media parameters, with the practice partly independent of the pre-existing notion of identity – indeed, it is the work of mourning to question identity. With this in mind she agrees with Sturken's uses of a cultural-memory model rather than using the older notion of a collective memory. She argues that the term 'cultural memory' highlights the extent to which shared memories of the past are the product of mediation, textualization, and acts of communication. Adopting a similar stance, she understands memory as outside of the analogy to a static text; rather, memory is textual work, a process of revision that, in the larger sense, is continuously performed by individuals and/or groups as they recollect the past selectively through various media and become involved in various forms of memorial activity. Taking this approach to the Web memorial as a site allows us to distinguish two levels of the configuration of memory: representations and direct experience.

In the next section I will look at some of the seminal works on Web memorials to discuss the ways in which the World Wide Web as a technology of memory has been used as a space for memorialization for more than a decade.

WEB MEMORIALIZING: A DECADE OF DIGITAL REMEMBRANCE

The pattern of Web memorializing emerged more than a decade ago with such sites as the World Wide Cemetery at www.cemetery.org, which may be the oldest virtual cemetery founded by Michael Kibbee of Canada- (Chang and Sofka, 2006). From that time on, scholars from different fields have been approaching Web memorials. In my literature review, I found three approaches: a) discussions about healing and grief on the Internet (Walter, 1996, St. John, 2006, Oltjenbruns and James, 2006); b) the articulation

of collective virtual cemeteries and c) celebrity memorials. Most of the work remains highly descriptive and/or empirical (Nager and De Vries, 2004).

Roberts and Vidal (2000) have conducted two of the most comprehensive studies published thus far. They began by making an exploratory approach to three web cemeteries: Garden of Remembrance, World Wide Cemetery, and Dearly Departed. They noted that the process of creating and visiting Web memorials adheres to Kollar's (1989) four steps for effective post-death rituals: entering into a special time or place; engaging in a symbolic core act; allowing time to absorb what has occurred and is occurring; and taking leave. In an afterword to this research, Roberts (2004) took her data to explore the existence and extent of a bereavement community in cyberspace. Her conclusion is that continuing bonds with the dead strengthen existing relationships, and increase the community building between those who are mourning their loved one.

Other scholars have focused on web memorials dedicated to celebrity figures such as Princess Diana, John F. Kennedy Jr., Tupac Shakur, among others, who have died either violently and/or unexpectedly. Similarly, tragic events such as Hurricane Katrina, the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, and more recently, the shootings at Virginia Tech in April 2007 have generated Web memorials. Taking up the Web memorials to 9/11 victims, Willlburn (2003) sought out characteristics of the viewer's possible interventions on the site – for instance, by leaving comments. Because of the cheapness of web space, essentially anyone with access to the Internet can create a site and design it to a greater of lesser degree to his or her own specs, at least as far as uploading elements goes. Depending on the site, the user can be flexible and personal, incorporating many of the elements too controversial or too disputed to make it into certain dialogues occurring in more official premises. He adds that, in these sites, the dissenting family members have the ability to create the memorial

to their own sense of loss. Still, the personal element in this research is muted by the lack of close personal ties, or their pooling in common tragedies – such as 9/11. The research paradigm in place insists on collective rather than cultural memory.

The notion of collective memory has "often been reified into an entity that is somehow distinctly separate and unconnected to the individual memory" (Rivard, 2007, p. 5). In contrast, a cultural-memory approach represents the shifting histories and shared memories that exist between a dominant historical narrative and personal memory. However, very little attention has been paid to the intersections of categories such as race/ethnicity, class, and national identity in web memorials. For this reason I will adhere to a cultural-memory approach that would allow me to investigate whether soldiers who are remembered are racialized, gendered, given class characteristics, and/or nationalized. However, because these characteristics, and indeed all the characteristics of Web memorials, are rooted in older, offline practices, I found it necessary to do offline fieldwork on physical memorials/monuments dedicated to Puerto Rican soldiers located on the island. The next section will concern the results of this fieldwork.

THE WHITE STRUCTURE IN THE CORNER OF THE STREET: MEMORIALIZING CULTURE IN PUERTO RICO

I have possibly passed by them hundred of times, but I never paid them any notice. Maybe I saw them, but I do not recall the experience as memorable. Perhaps this is so because they all look the same –always the figure of a male in military uniform carrying a weapon. They are so taken for granted that one suspects that this might be one of their functions – to normalize such figures, and their deaths. But this time was different, because I was there with a purpose in mind: to experience, deconstruct, and understand the physical memorial and/or monuments dedicated to the fallen Puerto Rican

servicemen and women of the island. My original plan was to visit as many of these spaces as I could during my four-day visit to the island. But before touring these physical spaces, I decided to explore the general public's knowledge and opinions on monuments and/or memorials in Puerto Rico.

I asked my friends informally, through my Facebook status, a simple question: which of the monuments and/or memorials in Puerto Rico caught their attention the most? More than a dozen of my Facebook friends replied to my prompt immediately with a variety of answers. A couple of them mentioned the 'Letters of Ponce,' a Hollywood Hills-style monument at the entrance of Ponce[126]. For some others, the Totem Telúrico[127], was the most impressive memorial/monument on the island. This sculpture is located at the *Plaza del Quinto Centenario* and was built in 1992 to commemorate the Fifth Centennial of the discovery of America. The sculpture consists of a giant ceramic and granite totem with jagged edges and shards of ceramic jutting out on all angles. It symbolizes the earthen origins of the people of the Americas. But the one that was mentioned the most was 'El Monumento al Jibaro' (in English, Monument to the Puerto Rican Peasant). The statue, sculpted by local artist Tomás Batista, is a representation of a humble, country couple stands as a tribute to the enduring figure of the '*jíbaro*', or local peasant, much romanticized in Puerto Rican culture and folklore. It has been used as a powerful symbol of Puerto Rican national identity since it pays homage to the rural peasants and families, who lived off the land in centuries past, yet continue to influence subsequent generations through adopted values and traditions. According to Lillian Guerra (Guerra, 1998), after the policies of Americanization began to change Puerto Rican society, Puerto Ricans turned to the myth of the jibaro as a kind of compensatory gesture, marking an essence that was being lost. She argues that the jibaro was "the real Puerto Rican, pure and simple" (p. 54). However, it is important to point out that this

essentialist and romantic figure of the jibaro marginalizes, for instance the history of slavery in Puerto Rico. But what happens when the jibaro wears the military uniform of the Imperial power?

Two observations that have caught my attention after completing the exercise were the following: The first one was the interchangeable use of the terms "memorial" and/or "monument" regardless the nature of the actual structure. Sturken (1991) elaborates on the practical differences between a memorial and a monument. She indicates, "While a monument most often signifies victory, a memorial refers to the life or lives sacrificed for a particular set of values. Memorials embody grief, loss, and tribute or obligation; in so doing, they serve to frame particular historical narratives" (p. 120). But she later explains that the fundamental difference between memorials and monuments is that monuments tend to use less explanation, while memorials tend to offer and depend upon textual reference of the dead. Hence, the interchangeable use of terms may refer to a lack of culture memorialization, particularly of the Puerto Rican soldier. To read the text, after all, requires standing closer to the statue, with the intention of reading it. The evidence that the statues were typically seen at a distance is, perhaps, an indication that they are objects that aren't especially studies by the passersby, but merely granted a sort of accepted space in the passerby's everyday territory. For this reason, from now on, I will use the term "memo-nument" to refer to such structures. This situation led me to a second observation that emerges from the survey: no one mentioned a soldier and/or military memo-nument.

A lack of a culture of collective memorialization regarding the Puerto Rican soldier does not mean that there are not memo-numents related to the Puerto Rican servicemen and women. In fact, there are nearly forty of them dedicated to the Puerto Rican soldier in different municipalities within the island. I use the term 'nearly' because,

at the time I was conducting my research, there was no database of memorials and monuments in the island, in contrast with the U.S., where memorials and monuments often become tourist attractions (i.e. the National Mall in Washington, D.C.). Word-of-mouth is the only source available to map some of them. Yet, most people on the Island are unaware of the existence of these memo-numents, even though they, as citizens, paid for them in funds that flowed through several local governmental sources, according to Secretary of State, Kenneth McClintock, and not State funded. Yet most of the time, there is not an official section in these budget designated for the purpose of building memorials, but rather they are suggested when there is some surplus.

Shanken (2004) explains that "Many memorials become as common as curbs, fences, traffic lights, and commercial storefronts. In this way, memorials, which were meant to be exceptional, to stand outside of ordinary time and space, have too often become seamless parts of that space" (p.169). One may argue that their location does not help. Most of these memo-numents were built at seemingly random sites, where available. For example, the memo-nument dedicated to the 65th Infantry Regiment is located on a traffic island in the middle of a busy avenue making the structure practically inaccessible, Yet beyond the location, the design of the memo-numents deserves special attention.

Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz (1991) argue that there are a series of disrupted expectations associated with the design of commemorative memorials and monuments. They state:

> In the case of war memorials, traditional expectations are satisfied by a variety of forms, including memorial buildings, realistic statues of fighting men, obelisks, arches, granite monoliths, and other structures that prominently name the war being commemorated and combine particular physical elements, including vertical preeminence, grandness of size and lightness of color, with national symbolism (p. 382).

Yet in Puerto Rico, the dominant statue type is depictions of fighting men in gear. They correspond to the traditional structure of the generally racially ambiguous serviceman carrying their weaponry. The statues are almost clones of each other; they include no women, in spite of the historical participation of Puerto Rican women in the military since World War II. This realistic style promotes the idea of the participation of the Puerto Rican soldier not only as a narrative of singular encounters that includes only men. Very few differ from this pattern[128]. For example, a few of them may include the figure of a child (i.e. the statues in Mayagüez and Caguas) in a very paternalistic view of soldiering.

These sentiments were not exclusive to the island. The Puerto Rican diaspora does not embrace a memorializing culture to the Puerto Rican soldier/veteran either. In fact, there were no memo-numents outside of the island until 1999, when a group of Puerto Rican veterans secured a space in Massachusetts to build a memorial to honor Puerto Ricans who served in the military (Miller, 2011). A group of veterans from Orlando, Florida are trying to raise money to build a memo-nument. This in contrast to other ethnic minorities in the U.S. like Mexican-Americans, who have a tradition of building monuments honoring their veterans in Texas and California.

However, in the island, these structures seem to actually inspire attention only twice a year: during Veterans Day and Memorial Day. Veterans Day is celebrated on November 11, the anniversary of the signing of the Armistice that ended World War I, to honor all who served in the U.S. Armed Forces, while Memorial Day is celebrated on the last Monday in May, and, although it originally commemorated the fallen during the Civil War, it now recalls all the men and women who died while serving in the military. To celebrate these holidays, it isn't uncommon for a small group of citizens to gather around the memo-numents, leave flowers, and participate in a very modest ceremony

that--if the group is fortunate --will be attended by some military officials and/or local politicians. However, the small number of participants in these events contrasts starkly with the high number of Puerto Ricans who take advantage of these holidays to visit the beaches around the island.

This is not to say that Puerto Rico is that much different from the mainland U.S.. Yet, citizen awareness and treatment of military Holidays in the mainland differ from those on the Island. For example, big events are celebrated all over the nation. At the National Mall,[129] there are concerts, food, memorabilia stands, and film festivals, and other U.S. Military official events. The media also gives special treatment to both Veterans and Memorial Day. For example, the news will feature some special aspect about veterans, while some cable networks will air films such as *The Deer Hunter*, *Full Metal Jacket*, *Born on 4th of July*, or *Saving Private Ryan*.

Thus, the question is well worth posing: given that Puerto Ricans are not hesitant about joining the U.S. military, why are they so detached from memorializing their soldiers? Why is it that the 'white structure in the corner' is often ignored by the locals? Is it part of an antimilitary sentiment that may exist in the island? Is it a symptom of what Arcadio Diaz-Quinones (1993) defines as 'memoria rota' (in English, "broken memory")? Is apathy towards remembrance of Puerto Rican soldiers a result of a "broken memory" that, according to Juan Flores (2000), describes a current generation of Puerto Ricans whose social consciousness has been fragmented by centuries of imperial mutilations? (Flores, 2000). Shanken (2004) would argue that this fragmented memory is "a form of passive iconoclasm, or if it is the natural order of things: forgetting…is an essential part of the process of mourning, and therefore, of memorialization" (p. 169). Also, as Wilson Valentín-Escobar (in Lao-Montes & Davila, 2001) argues, collective memory and commemoration reconstructs meaning, historical events and figures. In this

regards, these memo-numents in Puerto Rico served as a reminder, not only of our colonial situation, but also a reminder of the burdens of war, whether the issues it brings up be the fight for the demilitarization of the island of Vieques or the torments of the inadequately treated mentally ill veteran.

Nevertheless, if it is true that there is an apparent lack of enthusiasm for an official culture of memorialization of the Puerto Rican soldier collectively, there is an emergent trend of personalized memorialization online. In what follows I will discuss how the Internet has become an ideal space for memorializing Puerto Rican soldiers.

ALIVE ONLINE, BUT DEAD OFFLINE

Up until and including the Desert Storm war in 1991, twentieth century soldiers' families relied on letters and the occasional photograph as the prime source of remembering the soldier as a soldier, in case of his battlefield death in war experiences. I have collected many stories from the families and friends of soldiers on the battlefield in the generations before the Internet who, informed of the soldier's death, still kept receiving letters from him or her, macabre latecomers that traveled at the speed allowed by military censorship and the postal service. The WoT is the first American war (give or take the police action in Kosovo) in which personal communication was chiefly transmitted and followed through the Internet. The parallel to the ghost letters of the past are the ghost communications online, including SNS and other pages of frozen and uncensored snapshots of their livelihoods in the war. Discussions about SNS (particularly MySpace) becoming online memorials for soldiers began to be noticed by Internet scholars and the media in around April 2007 (Harder, 2007, Hunt, 2007); it was drawn to their attention by a MySpace communiqué, in which it was stated that MySpace would not delete inactive accounts, nor do they let others take control of a deceased user's

accounts, because of privacy concerns. Many of these ghost sites were simply abandoned by their owners for other sites, but sometimes the abandonment was due to offline events beyond their owner's control. However, what the scholars and the media noticed was that even though a site might be abandoned due to the death of the soldier who owned it, the site could, eerily, change: the reason being that a relative or a friend, having access to the owner's password and, therefore, to the account settings, decided to use them. MySpace, which at this point in time was especially responsive to the tastes of its customers, quickly saw that there was a market for the creation of profiles solely for memorializing purposes, as long as they comply with the site's rules, and tacitly encouraged it.

In general terms, Web memorials provide a place to honor the deceased that was, like the rest of the Web, different in the degree to which its interactivity and real-time nature made it different. Unlike obituaries in the printed media, these memorials made visible their construction and their lack of any set format (of layout, wording, illustrations, etc.) for performing their function. Moreover, Web memorials may be introduced by anyone at anytime from anywhere, which are unlike those physical ones that require an official filter. Thus, Web memorials are a low cost, easy access opportunity to remember people's lives. As memorials proliferated, they began to fall into the pattern analyzed by Kollar (1989): marking the site as a special space, engaging in a symbolic act, allowing time to assimilate what happened, and taking leave. Web memorials also enable the post-death ritual of writing. According to Rivard (2007), the nature of the Internet (exempt from the physical decay that erodes offline memorials) allows online memorials to have multiple temporalities, including the "illusion" of having claimed a more permanent space[130] and an imagined, instantaneous connection to the community of the fallen soldier's acquaintances. I used the term illusion because only the

very techno-optimistic users expect permanency any longer – the history of Internet communities, from Geocities onward, has countered any such expectation[131].

In her discussion on Web memorials dedicated to 9-11 victims, Wilburn (2003) recognizes that the Internet presents an intriguing memorial space. She argues "as anyone can create a site, the space has the ability to be flexible and individual, incorporating many of the elements [deemed to be] too controversial or too disputed" (p. 11). She adds that "these web sites are designed [by] incorporating the visual elements of other popular memorials…and subsequently are not innovative, creative or very different from one another". However, the nature of SNS and UGC gives these emerging memorials a new meaning, dynamics, and possibilities.

Tom Case (in Harder, 2007) sees the MySpace Web memorials as natural extension of social networking. He adds "this generation has grown up with this technology. It's become a natural way to communicate for them…once they get into the military; it's just another reason to set an account up. It's an exceptionally rich and easy way to keep up with your friends" (Harder, 2007). However, some MySpace users have taken their grief to another level by dedicating their entire pages to the ones they have lost[132]. The content of these memorials relies on: a) the constraints and capabilities offered by MySpace; b) the soldier's individual story, in as much as it is narrated in some way; and c) the choices made by the prod-users who create the profile.

While I was conducting a preliminary online ethnography of Puerto Rican soldiers serving in Iraq and Afghanistan by exploring their MySpace profiles, an unexpected situation happened during an informal, online ethnography. When I was "lurking" in these venues, going to soldiers' profiles, I started seeing messages of mourning and grief on one of them, written by family and friends in the "Comments" section. Among the messages, there were poems, prayers, messages of support, and

images expressing grief. Evidently, the soldier I was studying was dead. Given the unexpectedness of the event, I started archiving, informally, the dynamics that emerged from this profile for approximately three weeks. Several observations stood out, yet, what intrigued me the most was that, even after the soldier's presumptive death, his MySpace status was "online". Being "online"[133] in MySpace means that profile's user is logged on and is displayed with the MySpace icon in orange and the words "Online Now!" in green. The "online" status shows other Internet users that direct communication is possible – the owner of the site being online. It struck me as a poignant effect of the intersection of the WoT and the Internet that the soldier, dead offline, was 'alive' online.

Messages were posted on a daily basis, not only by families and friends, but also by visitors who didn't know the fallen soldier personally. These messages were generally directed to the soldier rather than to his family or friends. Most of them gave the impression that they were actually having a "real time" conversation with the soldier. For example:

> "I know you were watching this morning when I put flowers down... I love you dude[.]"
>
> "Hey uncle, we had [a] game today and lost but we didn't care because we all had fun!!I miss you a lot and will be commenting you soon!!" (Retrieved from: http://www.myspace.com/our_nations_hero)

During the third week of observation, several changes occurred in the profile. The profile's name changed from the soldier's name to R.I.P. Mike. Now, the profile picture showed the soldier wearing his military uniform, standing under the U.S. flag. The image in the background was changed from a sports theme to an American flag montage. The music background removed the original song and included a new play list. Among the titles were, 'Letters from Home'[134], 'If you are reading this'[135], 'American Soldier,'[136] and 'I'm already there,'[137]etc.; each song had an inspirational motif and an underlying

war theme. Mike's friend network also changed its appearance. As I write this, it has been a year since Mike's death, and 13 out of his top 20 friends still have 'R.I.P. Mike Rojas' on their profile names.

Other sections such as 'About Me' and 'Interests' were filled with local news clips about his death; they also included slide shows of the soldier with his relatives and friends. Images of the "Soldier's Creed"[138] and a poem dedicated to the soldier stood out within the display. What caught my attention the most was the "Details" section of the profile. The only two items made available post-mortem were "Status: Married"; and "Zodiac Sign: Pisces". In contrast, the other categories such as 'Hometown,' 'Religion,' 'Education,' 'Occupation' and 'Income' had been removed from the section. Particularly relevant for my investigation was the fact that his "Ethnicity" was changed from "Latino/Hispanic" to none. Also his location, which was originally "California", changed to the "United States," thus erasing any specific city or location. In this regard, once the memorial started to take form, his personal identity traits when living started to vanish.

I began browsing for other Web memorials dedicated to Puerto Rican soldiers.[139]I started browsing with an unofficial list of casualties as printed by the Puerto Rican newspaper, El Nuevo Día. Initially, out of the unofficial list[140] of casualties related to the WoT, I could find no one who had an individual memorial on MySpace. Yet, their names were included among collective online memorials created by other individuals interested in memorializing U.S. soldiers. There were around seven online memorials of this kind. One example of these is the profile named U.S. Fallen Soldier[141]. The focus of that profile "is to honor, respect and forever remember over 4,000 Brothers and Sisters in arms that have paid the ultimate price for their country and the liberation of others". However, in keeping with the subdued and official terms of the site, a collective effort,

the only information available about the soldiers was their name, age, date of death, unit, and a brief description of the incident in which they died.

This kind of collective memorials responds to the kind of "collective memory" that Rivard (2007) contrasts to cultural memory. According to the author, the technology of collective memory will always tend towards aggregating individual memories into a homogeneous group that is meant to transpose the individual's personal experience of grief into a collective that conflates race, ethnicity and national identity into one category: U.S. soldier (p. 5). This monolithic form of memory obscures the possibility encoded in the fact of death and the questions it poses (for instance, the questions of why and what for) that challenge the power relations embedded within the process of giving a specific role to memory. In this case, the role of memory in the U.S. Fallen Soldier Web memorial does not go beyond listing the soldiers who have died. The impersonal scheme of a collective memorial merges the processes of mourning, remembering, and the articulation of the soldier's identity into an offering to established power, thus staking a monopoly claim on how the past will be remembered and making personal or dissident memories of it into quasi-sacrileges – "dishonoring" the "heroes" who "sacrificed".

However, in the advanced stage of my online ethnography on MySpace, I found one Web memorial that transcends the traditional roles of memory by bringing into discussion not only alternative ways of mourning and remembering, but also ways for including forms of online activism.

SGT. CARMELO RODRIGUEZ, EVERYTHING BUT PUERTO RICAN

In February 2008, a friend of mine sent me a YouTube[142] video saying that "this story might interest you; I think this is about a Puerto Rican soldier". When he used the

wording “I think” it makes me wonder what ambiguous codes and signifiers made my friend connect the video with a possible “Puerto Ricanness”. At the time, I was completely unaware of the content, yet I was warned it might contain “shocking images”. The title of the video clip was “Carmelo Rodriguez III let down by the government,” and it already had 13,457 views. The video clip began with an amateur footage of who seems to be Carmelo Rodriguez, in a living room, wearing civilian clothing and dancing to a merengue with a baby in his arms. At that moment, based on his last name and the merengue[143] music in the background, I assumed that he was, at least, a Latino from the Spanish Caribbean. Then, the narrator (CBS reporter Byron Pitts) told us that Rodriguez, a 29-year old, was part of the Marine Corps. He was also a father, and a part-time actor. Following this section of the clip, the video presents a picture of Rodriguez as a good looking, muscular, and full-of-life soldier along with his Marine buddies in Iraq in 2005. Seconds later, the clip shifts to a disturbing video of Rodriguez lying on a bed, gasping for air, weighing less than 80 pounds, thinning hair, pale skin, and a face full of suffering. He was surrounded by his family and his seven-year-old son who were all wearing T-shirts imprinted with an old picture of Rodriguez. Minutes later, he died in the presence of the CBS news reporter and his crew. After this death, the clip went to the next sequence, which was a narrative of Rodriguez’ story and the reason that CBS was interested in him.

While Sgt. Rodriguez was serving in Iraq, military doctors misdiagnosed a melanoma, calling it "a wart”. Having thus passed his physical, he was presumably healthy enough to continue fighting for his country. Unfortunately, the melanoma was a symptom of a deeper, cancerous condition. His health deteriorated drastically, forcing the military to send Rodriguez back to the U.S., where he was finally diagnosed with skin cancer. However, because of the Feres doctrine, a 1950 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that

bars active-duty military personnel and their families from suing the federal government for injuries incidental to their service, he did not receive any benefit or compensation. Unlike every other U.S. citizen, people in the military cannot sue the federal government for medical malpractice. As a Marine, Rodriquez received a military funeral – the expense of which his family had to pay for.

It is important to note here that there is no mention in the news clip of his ethnicity or national identity. The clip is littered with signifiers that connote him as a Latino –maybe from the Spanish Caribbean: among them, the merengue song at the beginning of the clip, and of course, his last name. But what is emphasized here is his role as an exemplary U.S. citizen (which dismissed the possibility that he was a green-card soldier) and his love and respect for the military. In an interview his uncle states:

> 29 years old, you know, and all his life was good. Never into drugs, never into partying. Serving his country faithful. Served the Lord faithfully, and he held out positively. Because he is a soldier, he is a warrior, he is a Marine, he fought for his country and also for his family[144].

These words clearly key the story to CBS's narrative: Rodriguez was a good-citizen-patriot soldier. Rivard (2007) states the good-citizen-patriot is not only hypermasculine, white, and heterosexual, but also encompasses a national identity of the supremely trustworthy citizen. This trustworthiness is an image, a coded impression. To gain shelter in that impression, citizens who do not look like the type – white, male – must prove their status as citizen-patriots through acts of patriotism. In the case of Rodriguez, a Latino soldier, he proved his patriotism by dying on National TV.

At the end of the video, the narrator said, "Carmelo Rodriguez was a citizen, and to his family and friends, he was so much more". What the clip failed to tell us was that Carmelo was also a Puerto Rican, even though he was born and raised in the U.S. He was orphaned as a child. Rodriguez, like many other Puerto Ricans from the mainland and

the island, enrolled in the military as a means to pay for school.[145] I learned these facts by combing the Internet, which is also how I found his MySpace memorial. *In Memory of Carmelo Rodriguez* was created exclusively by an "unknown" friend right after the video was uploaded to Youtube.com. The profile contrasted from other soldiers' memorials I have explored. Firstly, the background is a sunset rather than a patriotic, U.S. related theme. In fact, U.S. iconography was almost completely excluded from the profile. The only signifier of U.S. nationalism was the image of a soldier on his knee under the U.S. flag and a message that reads, "Lets all pray for this war to end soon".

The contrast between the YouTube Rodriguez memorial – if it can be called that, since it was also a news story - and his MySpace memorial serves to underline the way in which mourning and remembering, under the collective aegis of "remembering those who paid the ultimate price", can differ from remembering that channels the possibility of activism. According to Kahn and Kellner (Kahn & Kellner, 2004), the internet is structurally a contested terrain where both dominant cultures and subcultures promote their own agendas and interests; this is not due to any dissident side of the corporations that create the SNSs or the UGCs, but because of the deal they implicitly make with viewers: 'you provide the content, and we provide the webspace.' As an unintended result of this deal, a public sphere can emerge that contests and intervenes against established power. Sandor Vegh (2004) has developed a rough classification system for various forms of online activism. His system includes Awareness/Advocacy (i.e., the informing and organizing the people), Organization/Mobilization (i.e., the decision to proceed with an action in online or offline contexts), and Action/Reaction (i.e., the various forms of hacktivism). Rodriguez' memorial(s) articulated all three of these dimensions, to a greater or lesser extent.

The MySpace profile embeds two versions of the CBS news clip (one longer than the other) as a way of informing or creating awareness of Rodriguez' case. Then, in the "Comments" section of Rodriguez' MySpace memorial, a person left the following message:

> Apr 25 2008 7:41 AM
> http://www. petitiononline. com/mod_perl/signed. cgi?fd1950&1 This is the link to sign the petition and help Carmelo's family!

The message was a link to an online petition to the President of the U.S., demanding that Congress abolish the Feres doctrine preventing malpractice suits by soldiers. This is a classic organization/mobilization and reaction/action moment. Online petitions, like offline ones, are written by some individual or group and then circulated for signatures: the signature means that one supports the meaning of the statement, rather than that one wrote it. When a web site or SNS hosts an online petition, visitors are generally able to learn about the nature of the petition and electronically sign it. Then, the petition is forwarded to its target (e.g., congressional members), although sites vary in the methods they use to deliver the petition (e.g., electronic or physical delivery). Other forms of organized activism emerged due to the publicity accrued by Carmelo Rodriguez's death, including the Carmelo Rodriguez Foundation. According to their blog, their "primary objective is inspired by the life of Carmelo Rodriguez…Who fought, even in his last days, to end the medical neglect and malpractice that takes place too often in the US Military". The Foundation's program is published on their blog, where they propose this plan:

> 1. Reach out to supporters and urge them to write letters to Congress (a template will be out soon).
>
> 2. Build support & awareness and plan "mass-letter-days" (to flood the Congressional offices with letters).

3. In time, eliminate the "FERES Doctrine" through lobbying and immense public support. (Retrieved from: http://carmelofoundation.chipin.com/)

As Gurak and Logie (Gurak & Logie, 2004) argue, online activism can be organized quickly and reduce hierarchical structures. Additionally, the use of hyperlinks allows the movements' participants to engage in networking practices and demonstrate their solidarity with the cause. The authors also argue that these instances of online activism often attract enough national media coverage to expand their boundaries into the offline world, something that was evident in Rodriguez' web memorial.

As a result of the Foundation, the "Carmelo Rodriguez Military Medical Accountability Act of 2009" was introduced by U.S. Representative Maurice Hinchey (D-N.Y). The bill would allow suing for damages on behalf of military personnel who are killed or injured by medical malpractice, but would contain an exception for combat-related injuries. The bill also required that any paid claim amount must be reduced by the amount of any other government compensation resulting from the injury (Janicek, 2009). The bill did not pass, although the movement is still current. In this way, the new tradition of web memorials provoked offline social change.

While the Carmelo Rodriguez Web memorial articulated the soldier's identity in several fashions – as a sick man, a family man, a soldier and a victim - it is of interest that both the MySpace profile and the video clip on YouTube removed any traces of Rodriguez' ethnonational identity. In contrast, they colluded in grafting the Latin signifiers in his identity onto the role of the good-white-male-citizen patriot soldier. His ethnonational identity -and in many ways his Latinidad, or Latino heritage- was buried with him, not only by anyone who followed his case, but also by those who created his memorial. Given the historic pattern of prejudice toward Puerto Rican soldiers since their inclusion in the armed forces, the ethnonational identity of Rodriguez may have seemed

an obstacle to the accomplishment of the goal his foundation, friends and family set. Yet if so, the second-class citizenship of the soldier vis-à-vis his or her legal right to sue for malpractice seems paradoxically to be enacted in a further scenario of second-class citizenship enacted by Rodriguez's denied Puerto Rican identity.

The evident deletion of Puerto Ricanness in this and other online memorials in SNS contrasts drastically with the approach to Puerto Ricanness that is articulated in corporate-sponsored memorials such as *Héroes Boricuas*.

HEROES BORICUAS: PUERTO RICANS BY DEFAULT

El Nuevo Día (ENDI) newspaper was originally founded in 1909 in Ponce as 'El Diario de Puerto Rico.' In 1948, the newspaper was acquired by former governor Luis A. Ferré, founder of the New Progressive Party (PNP) and advocate for federated statehood for Puerto Rico. Nowadays, ENDI continues to be owned and published by the Ferré-Rangel family. As of 2010, ENDI was the most widely read newspaper in Puerto Rico, with a daily circulation of 155,000 copies and a frequently visited online version (www.endi.com). ENDI has been known largely for its political coverage, although apart from that and community news, ENDI also has a sports section, a showbiz section, a business section, and a series of special sections of public interest. Special sections include covering hurricanes, elections, and/or weddings or funerals of important figures. Usually, these are static sections of websites, meaning that they include content that is not archived in the same way as the news sections, which also have an off-line presence. For the purpose of this paper, I will be analyzing one of its special sections titled *Héroes Boricuas*.

This section was created by parts of the newspaper's editorial team to honor Puerto Rican casualties related to the WoT. The design is simple: a main page with links to a series of vignettes with text and images of around seventy fallen soldiers. A new vignette is created every time a Puerto Rican soldier dies. Each vignette presents a section on the left of the screen that displays the soldier's official picture. Under that image, there is a text box displaying the age, place, and circumstances of the soldiers' death. In the following division, there are details about the soldier's life, such as place of birth, number of siblings, any given nicknames, favorite foods, hobbies, future plans, career goals, dreams, their assigned unit, time left in the military, and children (for example, father of two). Each entry ends with a final image, a (supposed) picture of the soldier's boots. The use of boots as a synecdoche for the soldier has diversified into a symbol of the price of war in (US) casualties. Each boot is usually tagged with information about the particular soldier.

In a prominent space in the upper side of the vignette there is a 550 X 200 pixel-size picture related to the story of the soldier. The use of images in this online memorial is important because it aids in the production of memory. The grammar of images revolves around six possible visual narratives: the official military burial, the official portrait of the soldier, the soldier in the battlefield, the former civilian, the member of a family, and the family by itself. Then, the title of the story and the name of the author are displayed prominently, if the story has an author – some don't. Those without an author can be considered as being written in the editorial voice of the newspaper. A headline with a catchy quote from the story precedes the article. The articles vary in length from 1,000 to 1,400 words, with the point being to capture something about the soldier's personal history, thus distinguishing them from the obituaries of ordinary civilians.

Based on the editorial voice of the section, the '"Boricua hero" is a heterosexual male. The literal translation the section's title, Puerto Rican Male Heroes, implies a standardized male depiction, in spite of the five females among the list of casualties. In a column by Luis A. Ferre Rangel, editor-in-chief, he mentions, "the stories of these human beings revolve around their mothers and wives"[146]. This kind of statement reinforces the idea that the soldier is a male figure and that females are solely those who mourn them. The editor of the special section, Agnes J. Montano, affirms this idea when she states "they were sons, brothers, fathers, husbands and friends of those who loved them before the war put their lives to an end"[147]. The five female soldiers among the casualties are, literally, given no space here – although space is made for them by a simple transformation of family categories.

One of the female soldiers listed on *Héroes Boricuas* was Frances Marie Benitez Vega, a 20-year-old who became the first Puerto Rican servicewoman to die in combat. Her story articulates her identity as a very feminine woman who happened to have a role in the military. For example, one sentence in her profile reads:

> Un vídeo hecho en honor a Frances por la comunidad escolar de Antilles High School, en la base de Buchanan, es testimonio de ello. En el filme, Frances baila, actúa y modela coquetamente en un desfile de modas que ayudó a organizar.

Her passion for dancing and modeling will neutralize her love for sports and the military and hence, redeem her femininity from the contagion of being too male-like. In another vignette, the case of Sgt. Aleina Ramirez Gonzalez utilizes a similar trope, this time to reinforce the maternal instinct of the soldier:

> No estaba casada y tampoco tenía hijos, pero organizaba actividades de los jóvenes en la iglesia pentecostal a la que asistía.

For Aleina, a woman in her thirties, any question about her femininity that arose from her being unmarried, without children, and in the military, is answered by the fact that she

played a motherly role in her military function. Nevertheless, in sharp contrast with the sexist treatment of some of the fallen servicewomen's vignettes, and the gender exclusion of the editorial voice in Héroes Boricuas, there is inclusion in terms of national identity.

One interesting element of this array of memorials is the inclusion of soldiers who were not necessarily born and/or lived in Puerto Rico, yet still considered themselves as Puerto Ricans, on the list. In the case of Ricardo Crocker Garcia, his family claimed him for Puerto Rico, even though Garcia can "barely speak Spanish…[and he was] born and raised in the U.S…" The relative claims, "he identified himself as Puerto Rican and was always caring about his family in the island, who he visited whenever he could".[32] Another case is Robert Marcus Rodriguez, the "first New York Puerto Rican to die in Iraq". Nuyoricans, who are commonly excluded from *La Gran Familia Puertorriqueña* were taken into account in *Héroes Boricuas*. His vignette alluded to a tattoo he bore of the Puerto Rican flag in honor of his Puerto Rican heritage, and also scenes of soldiers raising the U.S. flag in Iwo Jima, during World War II, and of the firemen doing the same in Ground Zero. Thus, he was tagged not only with ethnonational symbols, but U.S. and U.S. military symbols as well. Using icons from Puerto Rican and U.S. inventories of nationalist images captures something of Rodriguez's understanding of himself that is unresolved between his colonial subjectivity and his American one.

In this symbolically charged case, the dead soldier's identity was, while he was alive, a matter of moves that do not fit under any rigid paradigm, but challenges the notion that there is only one essential national identity. According to Duany, "the porous borders of political, geographic, and linguistic categories long taken as the essence of national identity…can no longer capture the permeable and elastic boundaries of the

"apenas hablaba español y nació y vivió en Estados Unidos…se identificaba como puertorriqueño y estaba pendiente de sus familiares acá, a quienes visitaba cada vez que podía" (Retrieved from: http://especiales.elnuevodia.com/especiales/soldados/33.asp).

Puerto Rican Nation. The spatial practices and subjective affiliations of Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico and the United States are now characterized by massive physical and cultural displacements" (p. 37). Duany would explain the lack of any final resolution of national identity in the case of soldiers Garcia and Rodriguez as the kind of "long distance nationalism" that emerges in the era of 'massive displacements". This Web memorial, which by its very existence can be accessed internationally and yet is sponsored by a local entity and refers to the Island in terms of the content of the memorials, exemplifies the porosity of nationalisms. But besides that, the idea of claiming the body connects with Lao-Montes and Davila (2001) argument that the insistence in having the body returns to the soldier's homeland "accents how space, geography and land are integral to traditional constructions of nationalism but also expands traditional discussions of the nation via the Diaspora" (p. 220).

After establishing the broader parameters of identity functioning here, I would argue that the more complex the memorial, the more it contains elements taken from both the collective and cultural memory. The names, organized in chronological order according to their respective dates of death, intend to chart the story of the war linearly. In addition to the formal features of the site, the editorial voice that intervenes to express and organize the narrative of the soldier's lives projects a number of features that, taken all together, blend the individual Puerto Rican soldiers into a monolithic figure, which excludes, for instance, female soldiers. In addition, male and female soldiers who have died as a consequence of the burdens of war in other locations are not included in the memorial. For example, a soldier like Sgt. Carmelo Rodriguez, who died in the U.S. as a consequence of melanoma, would not have been placed in this memorial site, in spite of the fact that his illness worsened in Iraq, due to the editorial principle that includes only the victims of violence or accident in the warzone of some sort. On the other hand, the

encouragement of the stories written from the point of view of the soldier's family and friends, and the insistence in claiming the Puerto Ricanness of every soldier, all exemplify the shifting histories and shared memories that exist between a dominant narrative of history and personal memory.

However, I would like to call attention, here, to the ongoing lack of tools for participation and/or interaction in this platform. The most significant marker of the platform's overt editorial control of the platform is the lack of any comment app. In sharp contrast with the UGC and SNS memorials, *Héroes Boricuas* does not allow visitors to comment on the soldiers' stories. There are no blogs, online polls, or comment sections available for discussing the articles. Hence, there is no way to add, change, and/or contest the meaning of those memories. I would argue that this decision extends the kind of decorum that one finds in offline newspaper obituaries; and given the contentiousness of the military theme in the island and the underlying pro-statehood editorial voice of El Nuevo Día, surely the lack of commenting is a way of forestalling any violation of the codes of decorum governing this memorial.

When reflecting on Web memorials such as El Nuevo Día's *Héroes Boricuas*, it is important to take into account the context of consumerism in which these memorials are inevitably embedded. This is so omnipresent that it is easy to forget. When describing, for instance, Carmelo Rodriguez's MySpace memorial, I left out the advertisements that MySpace always sprinkles on these sites, although they make a sometimes jarring visceral impression, juxtaposing and ad that "Horse Betting Las Vegas Style!", for instance, with expressions of grief. On another level, consumerism also finds entry to the content of the memorials. Sturken (2008) says that the connection between consumerism in relationship to loss, grief, and remembrance are not new. She argues that the emergence of a memory industry can certainly be seen in the early 20th-century memory

practices as well as during the 19th century. Yet, she acknowledges that the importance of commodification and consumerism to memory practices is a product of particular manifestations of memory culture in modernity and the relationship of memory technologies to mass culture. In the specific case of *Héroes Boricuas*, the casualties of war were commoditized and packaged in easy-to-read stories with powerful images and tropes in order to attract readers It is a law of the commercial life of the Web that sites live or die on their traffic, and Web Memorials are not immune to this law.

During April 2010, ENDI redesigned its entire network. When I asked those in charge if the redesigning the network would affect *Héroes Boricuas*, the answer was "We are taking it down; do what you need to with it because it will be deleted soon". After several years vicariously visiting *Héroes Boricuas* and observing how the list of casualties grew, it was hard to swallow their indifference toward those who have visited the site on a daily basis to honor and remember their loved ones. There was no proposal to hive it off and let some other website take it. This bothered me a lot. Perhaps the site's falling number of web visitors reflected a growing indifference to the war on the part of the population; however, for whatever reason, the fate of *Héroes Boricuas* was a brutal reminder of both the contingency of web memorials and, in particular, the ongoing indifference, offline or online, which confronts Puerto Rican soldiers even in the Island.

ENGRAVING THE DIGITAL WALL

During the final stage of my research, I discovered a new online memorial: a digitized version of the Vietnam War Memorial Wall. This, too, is an "official" platform, a virtual wall (http://thewall-usa.com/search.asp) created by the National Archives and Footnote.com, which aim to bring the feeling of a physical memorial to cyberspace. The

Web site was launched on March 2008 and consists of a system of links that connect names to casualty reports, historical documents, and digital photographs. The site also allows users to interact with the memorial. Visitors can leave messages and post pictures on every soldier's pages. This capability allows the online memorial to supplement the physical memorial located in Washington, D.C. What is fascinating, here, is that the names are of the dead from a generation that came of age well before the Internet. That generation is now in late middle age, or older, and it is among these people that the memorial has its constituency – its producers and users. The physical memorial relies only on names engraved in a granite wall "without elaboration, with no place or date of death, no rank, no place of origin" (Sturken, 1991, p. 126), which was, of course, the point: to emphasize the blankness, the non-personality, of the ultimate toll. Given the lack of context, the names of the soldiers coded them only as Americans, thus ignoring their origins. In this regard Fanon states "the settler (colonizer) makes history and is conscious of making it…the history which he writes is not the history of the country which he plunders but the history of his own nation in regard to all that she skims off, all that she violates and starves" (p. 51). But how does this new online memorial affect memorializing Puerto Rican veterans?

The new virtual wall affords another dimension that that of the engraved name. First, the memorial includes data not included on the physical wall such as age, race, sex, and date of birth, city of origin, religion and marital status. In the case of race, it is interesting to point out that Puerto Rican soldiers were classified as either white or negro during the Vietnam War, in contrast with the polyvalent racial taxonomy that prevails on the island, including *negro* (black), *moreno* (brown skinned), *prieto* (dark skinned), *trigueño* (wheat skinned), *indio* ("red" or Indian skinned), *jabao* (white skinned with African physical features) and *blanco* (white). These racial categories, either for

linguistic and/or cultural reasons, are difficult to translate into the U.S. context. Therefore, to be ascribed to a black-white category meant for the Puerto Rican soldier to dismiss racial mixing; as Rivero states, in "Spanish Caribbean nations mestizaje, or racial mixing, is a key factor in the construction of a racially integrated society, because everyone, regardless of skin color, is racially-mixed and, hence, an equal member within the nation" (Rivero, 2001, p. 13).

In distinction to the physical memorial, the virtual memorial can be a positive place for Puerto Rican veterans to make their mark with the new interactive technologies of memory. This is where Footnote.com, the corporation who sponsored the creation of the Wall, plays a major role in its online memorial. Footnote.com is a place where original historical documents are combined with social networking in order to create a (one supposes) truly unique experience involving the stories of our past. According to their website:

> Footnote.com is more than just an online repository for original documents. In addition to hosting millions of records, Footnote supports a community of people that are passionate about a variety of topics relating to history. Footnote.com creates an environment where members can share their content and insights, ranging from major historical events to personal accounts and family histories. Footnote.com, together with its members, is revealing a side of history that few have seen before.

Trouillot's (1995) four moments in the production of socio-historical narratives seem to apply very well to this online memorial, since it provides a space where created facts may be challenged (that is, added to, commented upon, etc. by outsiders), the assemblages may be altered by their visitors, and the narratives are theoretically liable to constant reinvention. For example, the possibility for uploading a picture of a fallen soldier can overcome the black-white racial binaries on which the soldiers were embedded. Furthermore, the option of posting a comment provides a forum for discussing and

adding elements to the record of the deceased soldier's experience, while also providing the possibility for historization and re-historization of a war recently ended.

In conclusion, online memorials offer access to the possibility of personal and private mourning rituals for those who have access to digital/social media, but, paradoxically, these private sites are also more public sites, and emerge in a transnational space like the Internet. These spaces borrow elements from traditional rituals of mourning and remembrance such as the traditional textual eulogy and visual references to the dead. However, it also brings new dynamics such as the possibility of intervening in history and online activism. They build community by transforming the soldiers' loss and mourning to a social context. However, such a community will be based on exclusions and inclusions of traits from their identity based on the content and purpose of the creators of the web memorial space. It also offers, to the official discourse, the opportunity for making further claims of sovereign power over the colonial digital bodies. The body that was previously controlled by the official procedures of the military finds a space to rest in peace but in a digital form. No matter the nature of the memorials, unintended/spontaneous or private sponsored, they will reveal insights into the socio-historical context of Puerto Rican soldiers, who, even after their death, experience the burdens of colonialism while trying to escape from their second-class citizenship, liberate their bodies from the bio-power exerted by the military, and achieve the status of a war hero.

Conclusions

The War On Terror officially came to an "end" with the withdrawal of the last American troops from Iraq on December 18, 2011 and the renaming of American operations in Afghanistan as Operation New Dawn (Jaffe 2010). I put "end" in quotation marks, however, because the truth is that, discursive and practically, wars end after their official endings. They end raggedly in households and in people's lives. They end when all the veterans are dead. Collateral damage, debates on war funding, and reflections on human cost are some aspects which makes us think that wars end at indeterminate points on the timeline of history. Wars stay alive in the scars from those who actually experienced the war, and who today fight to forget it, or at least to rearticulate their memories' politics. It lives recollectively in the media, which daily reproduce war narratives through fiction or nonfiction. It even lives on, more or less intensely, in the memories of those of us who watched from a distance, but also understood, assimilated, criticized, and/or supported it from our screens. Ending a war, however, is one of the great official fantasies of war making. If a country is to engage in as many wars as the U.S. does, it needs to set a doubtful mark on the calendar, a before and an after, to pacify and mystify its population, which grows tired of war. Speaking about the end of war is a favorite rhetoric, not only in the media, but also in those in power who boast about putting and "end" to the issue.

Some people argue the WoT really ended on May 2, 2011, when Osama bin Laden was killed by Special Forces during a raid in his residence in Pakistan. Others state that it officially ended on December 14, 2011, marked by a flag-lowering ceremony in which Defense Secretary Leon Panetta stated that a free, democratic Iraq was worth the sacrifice in American lives (Brooks 2011). For Puerto Rican soldiers, however, the war

did not end on these dates. Nor did World War I end on November 11, 1919, World War II on August 9, 1945, or Vietnam on January 27, 1973, the end dates of previous wars with Puerto Rican participation. Yet we can mark a beginning: the war did begin in 1917, when U.S. citizenship was granted to Puerto Ricans, a concession that also implied their involvement in the armed forces. As second-class citizens and racialized colonial subjects, Puerto Ricans were thereafter to be inserted in contact zones and, today, articulating their stories through social/digital media, anchored to their ethnonationality, they still operate within contact zones.

Politically, the debate around second-class citizenship is still an ongoing issue for both Puerto Rican islanders as well as diaspora Puerto Ricans living in the mainland. Some want to change Puerto Rico's territorial status so as to rid the population of the curse of second-class citizenship. For example, Pedro A. Malavet (2000) argues that Puerto Rico's century-old legal relationship with the United States constructs Puerto Ricans as legal and social second-class citizens because of their cultural nationhood. He argues that even though Puerto Ricans in the island are culturally normative, they live as second-class citizens. However, those on the mainland who are legally citizens by law continue to be othered by their ethnicity. He states:

> Puerto Ricans, as United States citizens by operation of law, are both normative, i.e., dominant, and "Other" because of their puertorriqueñismo (the state of being Puerto Rican). They are culturally normative in la isla and legally and culturally "Other," relative to the "Americans." This Article articulates a theory of Puerto Rican cultural nationhood that is largely based on ethnicity (p. 4).

Other voices claim that statehood would deliver first-class citizenship for Puerto Rico (Davila-Colon 1984; Torruella 1985). And a few others claim that first-class citizenship is really only to be achieved when Puerto Rico gains its independence, separating the island from its colonial past and creating Puerto Rican citizens (Miranda 1998;

Odishelidze and Laffer 2004). In the meantime, the local government is organizing a referendum that seeks to eliminate commonwealth as government status quo, so that the people can decide between independence or statehood.

Yet, while the island debates on the coming special election, President Obama asserted, during his recent visit to Puerto Rico, that statehood would require more than a mere absolute majority in order to be conceded. This statement blurs pro-statehooder's dream of including Puerto Rico's star on its flag into the other fifty on the American flag even more. The president's visit to the island--the first one since President Kennedy in 1962-- curiously took place within the backdrop of the president's homage to Puerto Rican veterans. During the press conference upon his arrival, and accompanied by local war veterans, President Obama said:

> "Puerto Ricans ... have put themselves in harm's way for a simple reason: They want to protect the country that they love…Their willingness to serve, their willingness to sacrifice, is as American as apple pie — or as *arroz con gandules*." (Robles 2011)

Ninety-four years later, Obama's speech confirms that the basis of the U.S.-Puerto Rico relationship is still colored by the military. For example, there is still a need to use men like my grandfather's brother, Inocencio Avilés, who survived the suicide mission incidents at Kellis Hill in Korean, in the 1950s, or my uncle Julio Avilés and my godfather Modesto Sánchez's integrity, who were forced to leave college in order to fight in Vietnamese jungles. There's still need to enlist Jean Cruz's courage, who, after having a crucial role in capturing Saddam Hussein, today suffers WoT collateral damage--he has PTSD, yet is not covered by full veteran benefits.

While many struggles regarding second-class citizenship remain, however, the day-to-day struggle against their marginalization or disappearance in the popular media even of the Island seems endless. Men and women enlisting in the army are medially

represented, if at all, as subpar and disobedient, infantilized, or demonized as the crazy vet, the volatile spouse unable to hold the family together, a social misfit, a time bomb waiting to explode. Although the tools of a new media age have allowed some to make dents in this image, it is still the case that cultural historical representations of the Puerto Rican soldiers in film and television, local and national, when they happen at all, mostly depict these same old problematic figures.

For these reasons, I can affirm that the struggle goes beyond media imagery; it also has to do with media ghosts. It is presence in absence, recognized by those of us who understand that the Puerto Rican subject indeed has participated in all American wars, yet is absent from all fiction and nonfiction narratives circulating in traditional media for more than fifty years. And even though I recognize that, in this decade, some progress in repairing that absence has been made (*Miracle at St. Anna* and *Las Guerreras*), the absence of that history will take a long time to heal, and requires a lot of other media figuration. It will also require more than one side, which is starting to come clear through the appearance of other dissident voices criticizing the military world in the island in non-commercial venues (i.e. *El lenguaje de la guerra*) or creating problematic images and invisibility moments (i.e. *The War*). Surveying the self-representation of the Puerto Rican soldier throughout the expanded sphere of media, it still stands out how little he or she matters to the traditional media.

Many questions arose during the time I spent revising my thesis, and attending academic conferences and discussion groups. Many of them were of a quantitative character, seeking to empirically understand Puerto Rican solider presence in the United States Armed Forces. How many Puerto Ricans are currently serving? How many casualties are Puerto Rican? Others aimed at establishing comparisons between Puerto Rican self-representations, comparing them to other Latino ethnic groups, i.e. Mexicans,

Dominicans, and Cubans. Others focused on the digital effects of abolishing Don't Ask Don't Tell policies originated at the "final" stage of the WoT. All research angles provided valid questions, some providing immediate answers, some estimates, others adding reflection and asking further questions to open up new avenues of research.

The key question of the moment is whether the mode of self-representation that dominates the digital/social media that takes an interest in the Puerto Rican soldier is really a form of democratization. Have the social media and user-generated-content sites successfully liberated the Puerto Rican soldiers from stereotyped imagery of old discourses like the Puerto Rican syndrome? Did the profiles in *MySpace* and/or *Facebook* change the collective image of the mentally unstable Puerto Rican soldier that is still current in local comedy? Did platforms like *YouTube* and *Vimeo* make visible what was invisible for half a century? Did cultural citizenship dynamics serve as a cohesive agent for a broken, second-class citizenship?

I must admit that every time I confronted these questions, my approach and my sense of the future became a bit blurred. Sometimes I wanted to see myself as a techno-optimist subject who affirms the liberating power of social media. However, I also felt my research was leading me into gray areas, avoiding the absolute "yes" or definite "no" that so often governs the discourse about the Internet. Finally, though, after completing six years of research, I can answer the question with more clarity and precision. Democratizing Puerto Rican soldiers' cultural imagery and liberating stereotypes linked to their position in the military is indeed possible. However, one must recognize that these larger thematics are instantiated within certain unignorable limitations.

First, the matter involves collapsing two worlds that are not parallel, but perpendicular: both online and offline worlds. Early censorship policies imposed by the military to SNSs and UGCs led me to conclude that, even though the line of military self-

representations did not come to a halt, they were indeed inflected and less spontaneous. I also must admit that the lack of open, incisive criticism toward war policies and decision-making points me toward a self-censorship process, unaware of censorship structures articulated by the Department of Defense; this was one of the instances in which the digital body came under attack.

Another factor to consider is the move from *MySpace* to *Facebook*. If it is true that *MySpace* was the preferred space for Puerto Rican soldiers for more than half the WoT, the transition to *Facebook* undid the flow of digital narratives woven on *MySpace.* Suddenly, the importance of hackability--the ability to redesign space to the user's pleasure--allowed by *MySpace* was de-prioritized, making usability and practicality more crucial, with all that this implies in choosing a profile for outlining new digital histories. And even though I must admit that new dynamic incorporations like microblogging (status updates) have made *Facebook* an ideal space for virtual ethnography, the lack of profile layouts, music playlists and other possible modifications that were possible due to *MySpace*'s HTML format actually affected profile virtual richness. A year after concluding my research, *Facebook* permitted members to modify their profile header, and mobile applications, such as Pandora, Spotify, and others allowed users to revamp user profiles, as *MySpace* did at some point. Nevertheless, I had already completed my virtual ethnography at the time these changes were implemented in the digital/social media.

Digital/social media literacy levels were another factor that influenced self-representation. Puerto Rican soldiers mostly belong to what Serazio calls "mash-up generation," yet digital/social media literacy levels will eventually change. First, not all soldiers had the hardware or software required for articulating their self-representations. Many of them would depend on material supplied by the army: these are the sometimes

censored spaces that are certainly not going to promote a soldier's honest creativity. In the same way, not all soldiers had knowledge about digital archives, about the possibility of serving as curators of their own self-representations, about copyright and/or fair use laws, and even less about learning to handle digital editing. Be that as it may, this did not prevent the Puerto Rican soldier from using, however rudimentarily, the sources available in order to tell the story from the battlefield. The Puerto Rican soldier's digital body was circulating from the first moment.

These self-representations from several platforms (SNS, UGC, Web Memorials) serve as enunciation acts that project their ethnonational identity, articulated through text, visual images (pictures, video), and music usually belonging to Puerto Rico's national iconography and/or memorabilia. The alternate use of virtual and music references from Puerto Rico are in the fashion of "simple memory policies." These self-representation instances become "synchronic warehouse cultural scenarios" (Appadurai, 1990, p.29). Thus, soldiers make use of "the fetishization of idealized and fossilized codes of their mother country to manage tensions produced by movement and the loss of the sense of familiarity and safety related to their 'home'" (Durham 1999). The codes' interplay will reproduce a new "contact zone," a mobile contact zone produced by a circulation between trans-contact zone and intra-contact zone. In this regard, Puerto Rican soldiers come from two different trans-contact zones--the island and the mainland--and will share the same space, but experiencing a different way of approaching their ethnonational identity.

Soldier self-representations on SNSs, UGCs, and Web Memorials reenact, in many ways, the same power and dominance relations seen in the offline world. As we have seen all along this dissertation, however, these platforms also provide the possibility for challenging power relations, especially by permitting the articulation of a cultural

citizenship. WoT has distinguished itself by a fluidity in terms of citizenship. According to Korte (2008), the U.S. government has shown an increased willingness to grant posthumous citizenship to "non-citizen" soldiers killed during U.S. military service. This, in the WoT, non-citizen soldiers' dead bodies become an official pathway to U.S. citizenship. The Puerto Rican soldier, as a second-class American citizen, can actually take his ethnonationality to another level thanks to digital/social media. Using SNSs, UGCs, and Web Memorials can actually shape cultural citizenship, a citizenship not acquired by birthright but through participating in a cultural sphere. SNSs and UGCs become platforms for Puerto Rican soldiers to create temporary, non face-to-face communities, ones that are inherently deterritorialized and mobile, and hence put into play the contact zones in which content is made. These channels and sites transform, however briefly, their problematic, political citizenship--a second-class citizenship—into cultural citizenship in cyberspace.

As a final thought, I would like to point out that Puerto Rican soldiers rebuilding their homeland from the battlefield with available resources is not new. Silvia Álvarez-Curbelo (2008) reminds us about the 65th Infantry Regiment in Korea:

> In a distant Korea, where everything was so alien, Puerto Rican soldiers went to extraordinary lengths to find some resemblance to the *Patria* they had left behind. At Christmas time, a month-long holiday in Puerto Rico, soldiers tried to recreate spaces of tradition. Many of the soldiers' accounts on the war emphasize on efforts to transform the sites of war into familiar sites; the artillery rumblings into Christmas carols or *aguinaldos*; or spike the dull military rations with a little Boricua touch. This was as important as oiling the gun or changing a wet sock. Once, a group of soldiers got hold of a stray pig and they had a traditional pork dinner using the bayonet as the roasting pole.

Nevertheless, these fascinating stories are limited to an oral tradition that, if not properly rescued, will inevitably be lost through the cracks of a broken memory, defined

by Arcadio Días-Quiñones as memory deliberately repressed by political power or broken by official repression or cultural exclusion.

Social media self-representations, however, guarantee the gesture and the hope of the memorialized moment. The resources for production, storage, and circulation not only about stories, but also about ethnonational subjects, have been put into the hands of the lowest private. The generation that fought the WoT was also the generation that grew up with these tools. These instances configure the mobile contact zone on which the imagined Puerto Rican nation is possible without political constraints. One could even contend that cultural citizenship provides the viable alternative to a second-class citizenship – although this does seem to underestimate grossly the forces and relations arrayed against the veteran in the offline world. As Malavet pointed out, "In identifying Puerto Rican cultural citizenship…it seeks to differentiate and empower, not to marginalize (p. 7). In this regard, the mobile contact zone build upon SNS, UGC and Web memorials, provides one kind of ideal space, in this historical moment, to challenge the legal and cultural conditions that deprive us from a full citizenship.

1 My father served in Company F #296, PRNG, and toured through Cuba, Jamaica and Panamá. My uncle, Julio Avilés-Perez (Air Force) and my godfather, Modesto Sánchez-Acevedo (Army) served during the Vietnam War; my Tio Abuelo, Inocencio Avilés-Perez served in the 65th Infantry Regiment U.S. Army during the Korean War.

2 The National Endowment for the Arts is the largest annual funder of the arts in the United States. An independent federal agency, the NEA is the official arts organization of the United States government. Their mission is to support excellence in the arts both new and established, bringing the arts to all Americans, and to provide leadership in arts education. According to their website, their Vision is "A nation in which artistic excellence is celebrated, supported, and available to all Americans". Retrieved from: http://www.nea.gov/about/Facts/AtAGlance.html

3 The language barrier posed the most obvious problem, and after rudimentary interviews by military personnel, Hispanic recruits were grouped according to their ESL proficiency and were assigned officers who could speak Spanish. Most Hispanic draftees were trained at Camp Cody, New Mexico, but there were seven other camps where non-English speaking recruits were trained. This training for soldiers with limited English skills was called the "Camp Gordon Plan."

4 The 65th Infantry Regiment, nicknamed "The Borinqueneers", was an all-volunteer Puerto Rican regiment of the United States Army. Its motto was Honor and Fidelity. It participated in World War I, World War II, and the Korean War. In the latter, they endured heavy ground fighting in which they were deployed in some of most mountainous terrains in the world, in extremely cold weather. Yet, over the next three years, they participated in nine major campaigns, earning governmental distinctions. The soldiers were also credited with capturing 2,086 enemy soldiers and killing an additional 5,905 of the enemy. 1956, the 65 Infantry was deactivated and became the only unit ever to be transferred from an active Army component to the Puerto Rico National Guard. The 65th Infantry Regiment 1st Battalion was transferred to the PRANG 92nd BCT with their sister battalion the 1/296th Infantry Battalion and has served in the War against Terrorism and Operations Iraqi Freedom/Enduring Freedom.

5 Singers such as Ricky Martin and Rubén Blades, boxer Felix 'Tito' Trinidad, Mexican-American actor Edward James Olmos, and Guatemala's Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberta Menchú, U.S. political figures, such as Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., Al Sharpton, and the Rev. Jesse Jackson supported the cause. Even the former pope, John Paul II, once said that he wanted peace for Vieques.

6 Retrieved from: http://www.myspace.com/elnuro

7 Among the reasons for a soldier to stop his or her service in the military, there is the one year deployment policy emergency leave (death of a close relative), Rest and Relaxation Vacation (R&R), a major injury, death of the soldier (casualties or suicides), and the end of the war.

8 According to AP (July, 2006), one month after its creation, a total of 430 people had asked to contact a Marine recruiter, including 170 who are considered 'leads' or prospective Marine recruits.

9 Retrieved from: http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/32283587/ns/technology_and_science-security/

10 Netnography is a research method derived from the technique of ethnography developed in anthropological research, and then adapted to the increasingly complex opportunities for gathering information about communities on the Internet. An approach of this kind generates two kinds of data: 1) transcripts copied from the forum itself; and 2) researcher's written notes on observations of the community and its members, interactions, and meanings. Two major ethical issues are emerging: the first raises the question of what is public and what is private online. Some researchers may feel a moral obligation to obtain explicit permission from the authors for publishing logs in academic papers while others collect logs without asking permission but then have computers, not people, read them. The second issue revolves around the privacy of the users, take precautions such as changing names, pseudonyms, or 'handles' and removing addresses from the logs (Ignacio, 2006, Kozinet, 2002).

11 Yank was the most widely read magazine in the history of the U.S. military, achieving a worldwide circulation of more than 2.6 million. Each issue was priced from five cents to 10 cents because it was felt that if soldiers paid, they would have a higher regard for the publication. Each issue was edited in New York City and then shipped for printing around the world where staff editors added local stories.

12 The selection of this period responds to the advent of TV and Puerto Rico when Telemundo began broadcasting on January 28, 1954. During that same month in 1954, the second television station, WAPA, Channel 4, began its test transmissions, and regular programming began in May of the same year. The selection of this period also responds to the Post World War II era.

13 *Gomer Pyle* was a TV sitcom character played by Jim Nabors that became popular in the show *The Andy Griffith Show*. Gomer Pyle was a good-natured, naive country-boy, characterized by his childlike innocence and his pronounced accent. His character eventually left his town to join the United States Marine Corps, as seen on the spin-off series, *Gomer Pyle, U.S.M.C.*, where his countrified, backward nature served as the perpetual foil to to the hard-nosed drill instructor, Sgt. Vince Carter, played by the late Frank Sutton, others, keying the show's humor. Gomer Pyle appeared on *The Andy Griffith Show* from 1962 to 1964 and on *Gomer Pyle, U.S.M.C.* from 1964 to 1969.

14 When I use the term "commercial television," I refer to WKAQ-TV, Telemundo, WAPA-TV, and WLUZ-TV (eventually WSTE-TV, Super Siete)

15 Retrieved from: http://www.usatoday.com/life/television/news/2007-08-26-burns-PBS_N.htm

16 "Longest running daily radio program--same host. The longest-running daily solo radio program is Tu Alegre Despertar , original Despertar Colgate, presented by José Miguel Agrelot (Puerto Rico), first broadcasted in January 1949."

17 Retrieved from: http://www.elpuntoes.com/pavas-puerto-rico-historia-artesanal

18 "Gulembo" refers to a naive, superficial, infantile person. Originally, it refers to a local tuber, ñame, which is believed to be large above ground, but is actually small when taken off the ground. Metaphorically, it refers to a weak, battered person; a good for nothing. (Morales, 2005, Tesoro Lexicográfico del Español de Puerto Rico).

19 It is also celebrated as Armistice Day or Remembrance Day in other parts of the world, falling on November 11, the anniversary of the signing of the Armistice that ended World War I.

20 Super Vet the super muscle hero motivated by the Reagan administration revision of history.

21 Don Johnson, as Detective James "Sonny" Crockett, plays an undercover detective of the Metro-Dade Police Department. A former University of Florida Gators football star, he sustained an injury which put an end to his sports career. He was subsequently drafted by the US Army and served two tours in Vietnam.

22 I say partially because, even though the character ceased to appear periodically in the mid-70s, he did appear at special events, such as network anniversaries, or in visuals summaries of television history.

23 These characters appeared in the shows *Los Kakucómicos* and *El Show de las Doce*, both aired on WKAQ, Telemundo.

24 PTSD symptoms' can be grouped into three categories: 1. Re-experiencing symptoms: flashbacks—reliving the trauma over and over, including physical symptoms like a racing heart or sweatiness; bad dreams, frightening thoughts. 2. Avoidance symptoms: Staying away from places, events, or objects that are reminders of the experience; feeling emotionally numb; feeling strong guilt, depression, or worry; losing interest in activities that were enjoyable in the past Having trouble remembering the dangerous event. 3. Hyper arousal symptoms: Being easily startled; feeling tense or "on edge"; having angry outbursts. Retrieved from: http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/what-are-the-symptoms-of-ptsd.shtml

25 In Spanish: Es el personaje más vigente de toda la comedia en el país porque es veterano, existencialista, ecologista y lo de Vieques y los talibanes es terreno fértil para él, pero a los productores se les ha pasado

26 Whatchamacallit refers to a shortened version of "what you might call it". It is also use as a placeholder name used for something whose name is unknown

27 In 1985, Lebron represented Puerto Rico in the *Festival OTI* for Latin American singers. He sang "Represento", a major hit song that was written by Lou Briel.

28 According to Merriam-Webster a legend is a) a story coming down from the past; especially : one popularly regarded as historical although not verifiable; b)a body of such stories; c) a popular myth of recent origin d) a person or thing that inspires legends; e) the subject of a legend.

29 WIPR-TV is a non-commercial educational, full-power public television station located in San Juan, Puerto Rico transmitting over analog (Channel 6) and digital (Channel 43). The station is owned and operated by Corporación de Puerto Rico para la Difusión Pública (English: Puerto Rico Corporation for Public Broadcasting). Most of its television shows on the main channel is local programming. Because of its audience, much of WIPR's programming is in Spanish, as with most Puerto Rico television stations. The station is branded as Puerto Rico TV. Previously, the station was branded as Teve 6 / Teve 3 and TUTV - Tu Universo Televisión. WIPR-TV was created as a result of lobbying for public broadcasting in Puerto Rico, beginning in the 1950s. The station went on the air for the first time on January 6, 1958 becoming the first educational television station in Latin America.

30 The film's three main sponsors were Ochoa Communications, Post Digit, and Guedes Films. The movie was shown at festivals in Chicago, Rio de Janeiro, New York, and France.

31 Retrieved from: http://www.drclas.harvard.edu/revista/articles/view/1067

32 Retrieved from: http://puertoricofilm.info/portal/index.php

33 Bayamón's Comerio Avenue served as scenerio for recreating Iraqi streets.

34 Retrieved from: http://intermediopr.blogspot.com/2008/03/comenz-el-rodaje-de-iraq-en-mi.html

35 Retrieved from: http://www.cinemovida.net/largometrajes/el_lenguaje_de_la_guerra

36 Retrieved from: http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC38folder/NYricanFilm.html

37 Retrieved from: http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC38folder/PRicanWomen.html

38 Hector Elizondo is a Golden Globe and Emmy Award nominated actor well known for his roles in *Chicago Hope* (1994), *Pretty Woman* (1990) and his most recent participations in *Love in Times of Cholera* (2007) and the TV series *Cane* (2007). He was born in New York City. However, his parents, Carmen Medina and Martín Echevarría Elizondo, migrated to New York City like so many other Puerto Ricans at the time, with the hope of finding a better way of life.

39 *Brown is the new green: George Lopez and the American Dream* was one of the documentaries in the PBS lineup. The film discusses how Latinos are becoming the largest and fastest-growing minority group and in which ways they are becoming big business for marketers and media companies. The documentary uses comedian George Lopez as a Latino icon who advocates for them a move into the mainstream. PBS' original programming also gave their content a Latino approach. *American Masters* presented the story of muralist Diego Rivera, considered the greatest Mexican painter of the 20th century. The program talked about how Rivera's work had a profound effect on the international art world. The show *Visiones* also presented a special edition that focuses on Latino art and culture traversing from New York City's hip hop culture to mural painters in Los Angeles.

40 Retrieved from: http://www.pbs.org/aboutpbs/news/20030924_hispanic.html

41 Nearly 45,000 Puerto Ricans served in Korea.

42 Congressional Weekly, 538 Issue: VOL. 49, NO. 09, 2 March 1991

43 "GUARD FLEXES MUSCLE IN THE WAR AGAINST TERRORISM.", Defense Department notice, 26 March 2003

44 See Washington Post story on Army Regulation 530-1, issued April 19th, 2007 – here http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/05/05/AR2007050500881.html]

45 Wiring is a common term used to refer to gaining access to the network.

46 Retrieved from: http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/npr/library/misc/asdpa.html

47 Retrieved from: http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/6115600/

48 Retrieved from: http://www.wired.com/politics/onlinerights/news/2007/08/milbloggers

49 There are a few reports of bloggers running into such trouble. One New York National Guardsman, Jason Hartley, author of the blog Just Another Soldier (www.justanothersoldier.com), was demoted from sergeant to specialist shortly.

50 Retrieved from: http://www.army.mil/media/socialmedia/

51 Facebook was just beginning to press on MySpace, and in the years since has surpassed it in popularity and profitability. See this site for a graphic presentation of the expansion of FB and decline of MS: http://www.flowtown.com/blog/facebook-grows-up?display=wide

52 Retrieved from: http://www.danah.org/papers/essays/ClassDivisions.html

53 Soldiers Shield is a MySpace group created to "support and shield the families of our fallen heroes from protesters who protest our soldiers' funerals (http://groups.myspace.com/defendersofourfallenheroes). The Military and Military Supporters Group is "a group for those in the military and those who support them to come together and talk about 'almost' everything" (http://groups.myspace.com/military). The Northland Anti-war Coalition is an organization of student, labor, community and political activists, groups and independent individuals who created a MySpace profile to oppose U.S. military interventions, organize against anti-Arab and anti-Muslim racism, and defend any and all attacks on our civil liberties (http://www.myspace.com/nawc).

54 Among the reasons the DoD allows a soldier to stop his/her service in the military are the one year deployment policy emergency leave (death of a close relative), Rest and Relaxation Vacation (R&R), a major injury, death of the soldier (casualties or suicides) and the end of the war.

55 Data acquired from the U.S. 2000 Census.

56 Retrieved from: http://www.facebook.com/#!/group.php?gid=8296737207&ref=ts

57 Retrieved from: http://www.facebook.com/#!/group.php?gid=6965466714&ref=ts

58 Retrieved from: http://www.facebook.com/#!/group.php?gid=9353635497&v=info&ref=ts

59 Retrieved from: http://www.facebook.com/#!/group.php?gid=8569610597&ref=ts

60 MySpace allows their users to display a music player in their profile to play one or more song of their preferences.

61 The mestiza consciousness was a term coined by feminist critic Gloria Anzaldua in her seminal book *Borderland/ La Frontera*. The term is a model for describing identities that are racially and culturally mixed and marginalized. Lisa Nakamura uses this model to describe how reading and writing on the web can become revolutionary acts that challenge menu-driven racialisms.

62 Retrieved from: http://www.myspace.com/iraqsnightmare

63 Retrieved from: http://www.myspace.com/itsyourmom15

64 Retrieved from: http://www.myspace.com/antriv

65 See Virginia Sanchez Korrol, *From colonia to community: the history of Puerto Ricans in New York City*.

66 Retrieved from: http://www.myspace.com/boricualopez32

67 Retrieved from: http://www.myspace.com/vjhernandez

68 See here for explanation: http://www.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=205925658858

69 Retrieved from: http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=600277387&ref=sgm#!/pages/ORGULLOSO-DE-SER-DE-CAGUAS-PUERTO-RICO/168449113663?v=info&ref=sgm

70 Retrieved from: http://www.facebook.com/pages/Moca-Puerto-Rico/MOCANO-PA-QUE-TU-LO-SEPAS/273001072581?ref=sgm

71 Retrieved from: http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=605089163&ref=sgm#!/pages/El-Yunque-tiene-que-ser-una-maravilla/86914987044?ref=sgm

72 Retrieved from: http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=549545625&ref=sgm#!/pages/Soy-de-Puerto-Rico/283683142065?ref=sgm

73 Retrieved from: http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=544727023&ref=sgm#!/pages/YO-APUESTO-A-QUE-PUERTO-RICO-LLEGA-A-1-MILLON-DE-FANS/248755467765?ref=sgm

74 Retrieved from: http://www.facebook.com/pages/US-ARMY-65TH-INFANTRY-KOREA-WAR-100-PUERTO-RICO/50522791064?ref=sgm&v=wall

75 Original in Spanish: Estan en Korea, Arabia, Iraq, Alaska, Alemania, en resumen los encuentras hasta en la luna, son Activos, Reserva, Guardias Nacionales y Veteranos, ARMY, AIR FORCE, MARINES, NAVY, y todos tienen algo en comun, somos Soldados puertorriquenos. En esta pagina ke estoy creando intento reunir a todos los puertorriquenos que servimos en las fuerzas armadas, para encontrar viejos amigos, para conocer nuevos, nadie te va a apoyar mas y conocer mejor ke un hermano boricua, el mundo es peque~o y estamos en todas partes vamos a respardarnos uno al otro ,ya mas adelante estare haciendole updates a la pagina e invitando a mas companeros para ke se unan, dejen sus mensajes ideas fotos ,lo ke deceen , Si eres Boricua y le sirves a tu nacion esta es tu pagina.

76 Juan Antonio Corretjer was a writer, journalist, poet, and political writer. He is well-known locally for his nationalist struggle for the Independence of Puerto Rico.

77 Original in Spanish: Yo no apoyo la guerra o mucho menos y espero que se acabe lo mas pronto posible...sin embargo algunos amigos que por las razones que sean son miembros de la milicia se encuentran en Iraq. Un asunto nada facil, mucho de ellos extranan nuestra islita y sus familias. Imaginate estar en un lugar donde hay tanta violencia, donde tu idioma y la cultura es tan diferente y donde estas solo. Empacando un paquete con chocolates, cafe y unas revistas para nuestro amigo Claudio....y sabiendo lo contento que se puso mi amigo Ivan al recibir un paquetito de navidad, o simplemente cuando ellos receiben una carta o un email, se me ocurrio que todos podemos ayudar y apoyar a nuestros Boricuas lejos de casa....Asi que por este medio me gustaria comenzar un projecto para motivar a todos mis amigos y al facebook a que envien cartas, paquetes y buenas energias a todos los que estan lejos de casa...

78 Bachata and merengue are popular music genres, original from Dominican Republic but very popular not only in Puerto Rico, but also in Latino diasporas in the U.S.

79 Some people opt to include a random image for their profile picture rather than one of theirs. Others set their privacy settings to a level on which the profile picture is not available, showing a generic silhouette instead.

80 See entry in Latinas in the United States: a historical encyclopedia, p. 423

81 The name and worship of Our Lady of Providence originated in Italy in the XIII century. From their, the devotion to this image passed to Spain and then to Spain's colonies in America. The original image in the paintings of the Renaissance showed the Virgin with is shown with the Divine Child sleeping peacefully in her arms. Due to their colonial history, the image of Lady of Divine Providence is most familiar in Latin American countries.

82 Who was mourned on weblists (here: http://www.b20vtec.com/forums/rest-peace/645952-nlt-looses-friend-hero-rip-pedro-millet.html) which referred to Facebook and MySpace pages.

83 The combination of keywords used to generate the units of analysis were as follows: Puerto Rican + Military, Puerto Rican + soldiers, Boricua + soldiers, Puerto Rico + Army, Puerto Rico + Iraq, Service Men + Puerto Rico, Puerto Ricans + Afghanistan, and so on. In the same way, the option called "Related Videos" was used for identifying other possible units of analysis.

84 "Lazy Sunday" is a song and digital short by American comedy troupe The Lonely Island, released on December 17, 2005, broadcast on Saturday Night Live as the second Digital Short. Primarily performed by Andy Samberg and fellow cast member Chris Parnell, the song and accompanying music video follow the two comedians on a Sunday afternoon matinee viewing of the film The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. Although the writers initially worried the studio audience

would respond to the short negatively, the video received a positive reception and enjoyed Internet stardom overnight, with multiple bootleg copies surfacing on YouTube.

85 Retrieved from: http://www.youtube.com/user/DODvClips

86 Retrieved from: http://www.youtube.com/user/MNFIRAQ/featured

87 Retrieved from: http://gawker.com/5528604/dancing-soldiers-on-youtube-a-civilians-guide-to-the-brave-new-meme

88 Retrieved from: http://nymag.com/news/features/67399/

89 Don Chezina (born Ricardo García Ortiz in 1976) is a singer, producer, and talent scout of the reggaetón music scene in Puerto Rico. He is known for his high, nasal voice and fast rapping style (known as "Puerto Rico's Machine Gun Rapper").His most famous song in this style is "Tra Tra Tra", which in 1998 became one of the first reggaetón songs to become popular in the US.

90 Retrieved from: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q9S8_nn0kXA

91 Retrieved from: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2T5_0AGdFic

92 Retrieved from: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vD4OnHCRd_4

93 Ypulse (http://www.ypulse.com/about) is a media network dedicated to provide news, commentary, events, research and strategy for marketing and brand youth.

94 The Jones Act was signed by President Woodrow Wilson on March2, 1917. It granted American citizenship to Puerto Ricans; it also created separate executive, legislative, and judicial branches for the local government, thus creating a bicameral, elective legislature. However, the governor and the president have veto power over any law approved by the local legislature. Congress also had control over any instrument approved by the legislature. The U.S. retained control over fiscal issues, and also authority over the mail, immigration, defense, and other basic government matter.

95 Pleneras or plena tambourines are percussion instruments included in Frame drums. These hand drums from Puerto Rico, are usually played in plena music. There are three sizes, requinto (for solos), segundo or punteador of and seguidor (for giving a fixed rhythm).

96 Retrieved from: http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=2z745WkePu0&feature=related

97 Retrieved from: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l9g6aAeOFEM

98 Retrieved from: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0OtQNnJOHiI

99 The décima is the root of what we call jíbaro or country music in Puerto Rico. This folk music genre originated in Southern Spain and the Canary Islands is probably the earliest example of the fusion of native rhythms with lyrics and melodies from Spanish music. The rhyme structure comprises units of ten lines called décimas, derived from 16th century Spanish poetry. Two of the most frequently encountered genres based on the décima, are the 'aguinaldo' such as the Jíbaro and Orocovis , and the 'seis'. The seis has its roots in the musical genres that came to Puerto Rico in the latter part of the 17th century from southern Spain. Retrieved from: http://www.musicofpuertorico.com/index.php/genre/f

100 In 1917, Puerto Rican born Rafael Hernández was working as a musician in North Carolina, when the U.S. entered World War I. The Jazz bandleader James Reese Europe recruited brothers Rafael and Jesús Hernández, and 16 more Puerto Ricans to join the United States Army's Harlem Hell fighters musical band, the Orchestra Europe. He enlisted and was assigned to the U.S. 369th Infantry Regiment (formerly known as the 15th Infantry Regiment, New York National Guard, created in New York City June 2, 1913). The regiment, nicknamed "The Harlem Hell Fighters" by the Germans, served in France. Hernández toured Europe with the Orchestra Europe. The 369th was awarded French Croix de Guerre for battlefield gallantry by the President of France.

101 Retrieved from: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGR7AIGo8zw

102 Retrieved from: http://www.youtube.com/user/alfredocrk/videos

103 Retrieved from: http://www.youtube.com/user/comoasi1?feature=watch

104 Retrieved from: http://www.hiphopboricua.com

105 Due to a lack of expertise on the genre, I have decided not to discuss its aesthetics any further.

106 Retrieved from: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LEAD2bYgNRc&feature=related

107 Retrieved from: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_XToTNCgdg

108 Retrieved from: http://www.youtube.com/user/CASTROsoldier1985#p/a

109 Retrieved from: http://www.army.mil/drillsergeant/

110 Retrieved from: http://www.youtube.com/user/CASTROsoldier1985#p/a

111 Retrieved from: http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/dope/diemfdie.html

112 Retrieved from: http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=LzhmX-LhdVg&feature=related.

113 Retrieved from: http://www.goarmy.com/about/ranks-and-insignia.html

114 Retrieved from: http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=KcTSzo2g3sU

115 Retrieved from: http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=zW7I9XIKWcg&feature=related

116 Retrieved from: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vDmSK0r1cJo

117 Retrieved from: http://www.cafemamipr.com/marca.htm

118 Filmsters is a television and film production company based in Annapolis, Maryland and Los Angles, California. Their credits have appeared on ABC, CBS, NBC, PBS, Discovery, Turner, Lifetime, HBO, Cinemax, Animal Planet, Discovery Health, Current TV, and many others.

119 Retrieved from: http://vimeo.com/2501531

120 Herald Sun, March 23, 2008.

121 Otago Daily Times - Mar 24 9:08 AM

122 Sydney Morning Herald - Mar 24 6:10 AM

123 The Gleaner - Mar 24 10:42 PM

124 Retrieved from: http://www.endi.com/

125 An appellation which many Puerto Ricans prefer as a matter of ethnic pride. “Borinquen” was the name Puerto Rico’s indigenous Indians, the Taino, gave to their island, and “Boricua” is a native of “Borinquen”. The term means “valiant people”. (The Puerto Rican national anthem is "La Borinqueña”, [Boricua song].

126The Ponce Letters Monument consists of five black and red colossal sculptures "arrogantly" spelling out the city’s name. Due to its peculiar location at the center and both sides of a major expressway, it is one of Puerto Rico’s most controversial public art works. In fact, is the only Ponce attraction you won’t be able ignore. As you pass through the City’s main entrance where Highways PR 52 and PR 10 intersect, you will inevitably notice Ponce artist Carlos A. Rivera Villafañe's monumental (6m x 5.5m x 3.7m) creation, deliberately mimicking the look of the world famous HOLLYWOOD sign. The Ponce Letters monument is made of marine grade steel almost half the size of its California counterpart, and it originally formed part of The Public Art Project commissioned by the government of Puerto Rico, depicting some 97 site-specific masterpieces located throughout the island. Retrieved from: http://www.notiuno.com/uploads/2010/02/ponce.jpg

128 Tótem Telúrico. Rising 40 feet from this level, the monument is a tribute to the discovery of the New World. Commissioned to local architect and ceramicist Jaime Suárez as part of the celebrations in 1992, el Tótem was shaped out of black granite and ceramic replicas of archeological artifacts.

129 The Monumento de la Recordación, located within the perimeters of the Capitol, consists of a wall –similar to the one in Washington- with the engraved names of the Puerto Rican servicemen who died in World War II, Korea and the Vietnam War.

130 The National Mall is an open-area national park in downtown Washington, D.C. The National Mall is a unit of the National Park Service (NPS), and is administered by the National Mall and Memorial Parks unit. The term "National Mall" commonly includes areas that are officially part of West Potomac Park and Constitution Gardens to the west, and is taken to refer to the

entire area between the Lincoln Memorial and the United States Capitol, with the Washington Monument providing a division slightly west of the center. The National Mall receives approximately 24 million visitors each year.

131 Rivard acknowledges that the spectrum of degrees of the expectation of permanency, given the technological vulnerability of a Web site over the period that the Internet has functioned. See further on for the taking down of the Héroes Boricuas site.

132 I think the notion of 'impermanency' should be interrogated, here, as well. In other words, this should be one of your ethnographic problematics, rather than a principle that you lay down via Rivard.]

133 See, for instance, Contessa Hopper, the 16-year-old fiancé of Pvt. Matthew Zeimer, an 18-year-old 3rd ID soldier who was killed on February 2, in a possible friendly fire incident. Hopper has since changed her user name to "You Changed My Life" and has posted pictures of Zeimer to her page against the backdrop of a flying eagle and an American flag.

134 There is an option on MySpace's settings that allows users to appear offline to their network of friends. There is also an HTML code that MySpace-profile owners can use to hide their online status.

135 By John Michael Montgomery.

136 By Tim McGraw.

137 By Toby Keith.

138 By Lone Star.

139 The U.S. Soldier's Creed is a standard that all United States Army personnel are encouraged to adhere to. All U.S. Army enlisted personnel are taught the Soldier's Creed during basic training, and it is required knowledge at most enlisted promotion boards to compete for the rank of Sergeant and above, as well as Soldier of the Month boards.

140 To get to these conclusions I used MySpace's own search engine's capabilities.

141 It is important to point out that soldiers who died as a consequence of one or another of the events connected with the war are excluded from the list of casualties.

142 Retrieved from: http://www.myspace.com/fallenussoldiersmemorial

143 Retrieved from: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D8x5Oz8qW4k

144 Merengue is rhythm originally from Dominican Republic. However it is very popular in other Latin American countries, especially in Puerto Rico.

145 Retrieved from: http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/01/31/eveningnews/main3776580.shtml

146 I learned about this through electronic communication with a relative who preferred maintain his privacy.

147 Retrieved from: http://especiales.elnuevodia.com/especiales/soldados/h1.asp

148 Retrieved from: http://especiales.elnuevodia.com/especiales/soldados/h2.asp

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